



## 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

Sixth meeting  
Hyderabad, India, 1-5 October 2012

### REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTREACH STRATEGY FOR THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY (2008-2012)

*Note by the Executive Secretary*

#### I. INTRODUCTION

1. At their fourth meeting, the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety welcomed the Outreach Strategy for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (2008-2012) which was developed by the Executive Secretary to increase the visibility, awareness, and reach of the Protocol (decision BS-IV/17, paragraph 6). In paragraph 8 of the same decision the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to report on the implementation of the outreach strategy at the sixth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

2. Accordingly, this note provides in section II an overview of the progress made in the implementation of the outreach strategy and the challenges encountered. It also proposes in Section III the way forward, including possible measures to enhance the Protocol outreach activities. The note draws on the information provided in the Secretariat's quarterly and annual reports, feedback from readers of the Biosafety Protocol Newsletter and the Protocol website and Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) users, and from the second national reports on the implementation of the Protocol.

#### II. OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE SECRETARIAT TO IMPLEMENT THE OUTREACH STRATEGY

3. Over the last four years, the Secretariat has carried out a number of activities towards the three main objectives of the Outreach Strategy (2008-2012), namely: (i) to increase the visibility and awareness of the Protocol; (ii) to inform and educate different target groups about the Protocol through sharing of information; and (iii) to engage, motivate and build collaborative partnerships with various targeted groups. This section provides a summary of the activities undertaken and the main achievements made under each of these objectives.

### **A. *Increasing the Visibility and Awareness of the Protocol***

4. The Secretariat implemented the following activities with the view to increasing the visibility and awareness of the Protocol:

(a) *CEPA Fair*: During the fifth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol held in October 2010 in Nagoya, the Secretariat organised a Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) Fair where Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations displayed awareness materials about the Protocol and shared national experiences on the implementation of the Protocol through posters, printed materials, CD-ROMs, videos and a series of PowerPoint presentations. The Fair attracted more than 600 participants. A similar Fair will be held in the margins of the sixth meeting of the Parties.<sup>1</sup>

(b) *Annual Exhibitions at McGill University*: Since 2010, the Secretariat has co-organized with the Redpath Museum annual exhibitions at McGill University in Montreal, Canada to contribute to raising awareness of the Protocol. The exhibitions involved a display of various banners, posters, publications and videos on the Protocol. The first exhibition was held from 28 May to 4 June 2010 as part of the celebrations for the International Year on Biodiversity. The second and third exhibitions were held from 27 May to 3 June 2011 and 25 May to 1 June 2012, respectively, as part of the celebrations for the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity. On average, each exhibition attracted more than 4,000 visitors, including students, teachers and the general public.

(c) *Presentations*: Staff of the Secretariat made presentations about the Protocol at a number of meetings, workshops and other events. For example, presentations on the Protocol were made to more than ten groups of students from Concordia University, McGill University and University Montreal which were hosted at the Secretariat Offices. Presentations were also made to students at the University of Minnesota (US) in September 2009, University of Ottawa (Canada) in March 2010 and Kobe University (Japan) in October 2010. Furthermore, the Secretariat made presentations on the Protocol at a meeting organised for business and industry in January 2010 in Washington and at the Second International Youth Symposium for Biodiversity that was July 2009 in Ottawa.

### **B. *Dissemination of news and information about the Protocol***

5. The Secretariat carried out a number of activities aimed at informing and educating different target audiences about the Protocol, including through dissemination of printed materials and audio-visuals, collection and dissemination of biosafety-related news, press releases, use of social media and organization of seminars and workshops.

(a) *Printed materials*: A number of education and outreach materials – including newsletters, factsheets, booklets and books – were produced and disseminated in hard copy, CD-ROM and/or online. These included:

- i. Six issues of the newsletter for the Protocol (*the Biosafety Protocol News*) – disseminated online;
- ii. Ten factsheets and 10 press briefs – more than 10,000 copies disseminated as part of the celebrations of the International Year on Biodiversity and the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity;
- iii. Booklets of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the Nagoya – Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability And Redress; the Guide to the Roster of Biosafety Experts; and the COP-MOP decisions – more than 25,000 copies disseminated;

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<sup>1</sup> Information about the upcoming CEPA Fair at the sixth meeting is available at: <http://bch.cbd.int/mop6/cepafair/>.

- iv. A brochure on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety – over 5,000 copies disseminated;
- v. Over 4000 copies of CD-ROMs with all the biosafety publications;
- vi. Video on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety – at least 200 copies disseminated on CD-ROM;
- vii. Three issues of the Biosafety Technical Series – 3,000 copies produced.<sup>2</sup>
- viii. Four banners on: the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; Information Sharing and the Biosafety Clearing-House; Risk Assessment and Risk Management; and Handling, Transport, Packaging and Identification

(b) *Audio-visual materials:* In March 2011, the Secretariat produced and released a video on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which describes the objective and main provisions of the Protocol in a simple, layman's language. In collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the video has been translated into Arabic, French, Russian and Spanish. The video is available online.<sup>3</sup> At least 200 copies of the video have also been disseminated on CD-ROM. The Secretariat has also made available through the BCH a video containing the BCH Tutorials and a video on the Green Customs Initiative, which includes a component on the Cartagena Protocol.

(c) *Media outreach:* The Secretariat carried out a number of media-related activities. It organised at least 8 press conferences and media interviews related to the Protocol, including during the COP-MOP meetings, the opening and closure of signatures for the Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress and during the ceremonies to mark the fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Protocol. More than 10 press releases and press briefs have also been issued in the last four years.

(d) *News collection and dissemination:* The Secretariat continued to identify and make available news articles related to biosafety through the Biodiversity News Headline database.<sup>4</sup> On average, 200 news articles related to biosafety-issues are collected and disseminated every year. Interested persons can subscribe to the "BCH Current Awareness Service", a listserv that send out, on a weekly basis, summaries of new and updated records in the BCH in categories selected by the user, including the latest news.<sup>5</sup> To date more than 2500 subscribers, including national focal points, the media, relevant organisations and interested individuals are using the service.

(e) *Webcasts:* During the fourth and fifth meetings of the COP-MOP, the official sessions and some of the press conferences and side events were webcasted live and on-demand.<sup>6</sup> The webcasts provided an opportunity for a wider cross-section of the public to follow the COP-MOP proceedings online and also helped to increase the visibility of the meetings.

(f) *New media:* The Secretariat is also using the new web-based media tools to increase the sharing of biosafety information online. For example, biosafety news and related notifications are now being disseminated to interested subscribers through the 'Really Simple Syndication' (RSS). Interested users can also access information on the Protocol through social media sites, including the Twitter and Facebook pages on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, a YouTube site on the Protocol and a Flickr site

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<sup>2</sup> The technical series can be accessed at: [http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/cpb\\_technicalseries.shtml](http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/cpb_technicalseries.shtml)

<sup>3</sup> The video is available online at [http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/cpb\\_media\\_video1.shtml](http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/cpb_media_video1.shtml)

<sup>4</sup> News headlines on biosafety can be accessed by searching the Biodiversity News database (<http://www.cbd.int/information/news.shtml>) using the subject title "Biosafety and Biotechnology".

<sup>5</sup> See details at: <http://bch.cbd.int/resources/mailling-lists/>

<sup>6</sup> See archived webcasts at: <http://www.cbd.int/mop4/webcast/>

for sixth COP-MOP meeting.<sup>7</sup> The Secretariat has added a social bookmark and share button widget to the main Protocol web pages.

(g) *Protocol website*: In 2010 the Secretariat redesigned the Protocol website to expand its content, improve its functionality and layout, and to make it more use-friendly.<sup>8</sup> Among its new features, the website is now available in all the six UN official languages and has links to various websites with relevant information, including links to social media pages – Twitter, Facebook and YouTube – with information on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Other new features include the possibility to subscribe to various mailing lists (including the RSS, the Biosafety Protocol News and the BCH Current Awareness Service), access to the photo gallery and the virtual display tables, and links to various online discussion forums. Since 2008, the number of people accessing the Protocol website has increased. In 2011 the total number of visits to different Protocol web pages increased to 91,565 from 50,624 visits in 2010 and as of 5 September 2012, the number of visits this year stood at 74,141.

(h) *Seminars and workshops*: The Secretariat co-organised with the Aarhus Convention Secretariat two workshops on public awareness, access to information and participation regarding living modified organisms (LMOs)/genetically modified organisms (GMOs) from 8 to 9 October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan and from 19 to 20 May in Cologne, Germany. More than 100 participants, including representatives from governments and organisations involved in the Aarhus Convention, attended the two workshops.

### **C. *Engagement and collaboration with various partners***

6. The Secretariat has undertaken a number of activities to engage, motivate and collaborate with various partners to promote awareness of the Protocol and broaden support for its implementation. Some of the main achievements in this regard include the following:

(a) *Collaboration with the Aarhus Convention*: As requested by the COP-MOP the Secretariat has established a collaborative partnership with the Aarhus Convention Secretariat on issues related to public awareness, access to information and participation regarding living modified organisms/genetically modified organisms. Through that partnership, the two secretariats have implemented a number of joint activities. In addition to the two joint workshops referred to above, they organised joint side events at COP-MOP 4 in Bonn, at COP-MOP 5 in Nagoya and at the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention in July 2011 in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova. In June this year, they also co-organised two online Discussion Groups on public access to biosafety information under the Online Forum on Public Awareness, Education and Participation Concerning the Safe Transfer, Handling and Use of LMOs.

(b) *Engagement of the media*: The Secretariat has enhanced its contact and engagement with the media in the last few years. By June 2012, a total of 790 journalists and other media representatives interested in biosafety-related issues had been identified and registered in the media and press database. In November 2008, the Secretariat organized a workshop for journalists in Montreal which was attended by more than 30 journalists. Partly as a result of the Secretariat's ongoing engagement the number of media representative attending major events under the Protocol has steadily increased. For example, more than 1,000 media representatives were accredited to attend the COP-MOP 5 meeting in Nagoya. In order to further enhance the engagement of the media, the Secretariat also established a Biosafety Media

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<sup>7</sup> You can access information on the Protocol through RSS at: <http://www.cbd.int/rss/cpnews.aspx>; Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/bchcpb>, Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/UN.Biosafety>; Flickr at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mop6/>; and YouTube at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/bchcpb>.

<sup>8</sup> The Protocol website is accessible at: <http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/>

Network, which provides a platform for journalists and other media personnel interested in issues related to biosafety to share information, views and relevant experiences.<sup>9</sup>

(c) *Engagement of academic institutions:* The Secretariat continued to collaborate with a number of academic institutions with the view to educating students and academic staff about the provisions of the Protocol and promoting the development or strengthening biosafety education, training and research programmes. In February 2010, the Secretariat organized the third international meeting of academic institutions and organizations involved in biosafety education and training, which among other things, explored options for facilitating collaboration and exchange of information, training materials, curricula and staff resources between relevant academic institutions and organizations.

(d) *Regular contact with Parties:* The Secretariat maintained regular contact with the Cartagena Protocol and BCH national focal points and other relevant officials on issues related to public awareness and outreach regarding the Protocol. For example, it has been in close contact with a number of the national focal points with regard to the baseline surveys to evaluate the level of public awareness of the issues regarding LMOs.

7. A number of constraints and challenges were encountered in the implementation of the outreach strategy. The main challenges included lack of resources, the language barrier, and lack of expertise and resource materials on biosafety communication.

(a) *Lack of resources:* The Secretariat was unable to carry out some of the planned activities due to lack of adequate human and financial resources. For example, due to resource constraints it was not possible to organize regional biosafety outreach activities, including seminars and workshops for journalists and other target groups and making presentations about the Protocol at relevant international and regional events in order to increase the visibility and reach of the Protocol.

(b) *Language barrier:* The limited availability of biosafety awareness materials in various languages is another major barrier encountered. Most awareness materials on biosafety are currently available in English. There is a need to translate available materials in as many national languages as possible but there are limited resources for doing so.

(c) *Limited expertise and resource materials on biosafety communication:* Currently most countries have very few experts trained in biosafety communication. It is essential to organise training-of-trainers workshops to increase the pool of experts in each country that can inform and educate the public about the Protocol and biosafety issues in general. It would also be useful to develop training and guidance materials for use by Parties and other stakeholders to effectively communicate biosafety issues to the general public.

8. Despite the above constraints, significant progress has been made towards achieving the objectives of the outreach strategy. The Secretariat has laid a strong foundation for promoting awareness and understanding of the Protocol, increasing its visibility and reach, and broadening support for its implementation.

### III. THE WAY FORWARD

9. Most of the elements of the Outreach Strategy for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (2008-2012) are still relevant. In this regard, the Secretariat will continue to use the current strategy until 2016,

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<sup>9</sup> The network can be accessed at: [http://bch.cbd.int/onlineconferences/portal\\_art23/media\\_network.shtml](http://bch.cbd.int/onlineconferences/portal_art23/media_network.shtml)

taking also into account relevant elements in the Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (2011-2020) and the programme of work on public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms (2011-2015). An internal review will be carried out in conjunction with mid-term review of the Strategic Plan for the Protocol and the third assessment and review of the effectiveness of the Protocol to determine the need for developing a new outreach strategy.

10. During the period 2013-2016, the Secretariat will, among other things, undertake the following measures to enhance the Protocol outreach activities:

(a) Undertake joint regional outreach activities with relevant organisations, including press conferences, exhibitions, side events as well as seminars and workshops for specific target groups. These activities will be organized back-to-back with other biosafety and biodiversity meetings and relevant international events;

(b) Organise regional training-of-trainers workshops to increase the pool of experts that can effectively inform and educate the public about the Protocol and biosafety issues in general;

(c) Develop training and guidance materials help Parties and other stakeholders improve communication of biosafety issues to various target groups, including how to develop, package and communicate consistent messages;

(d) Identify and disseminate good practices and lessons learned on biosafety communication and outreach through the Biosafety Clearing-House.

11. Effective communication and outreach requires a systematic and coordinated approach. The outreach strategy has helped to guide the Secretariat's outreach activities on the Protocol and ensure that they are integrated and focused. The Secretariat will continue to carry out all its outreach activities within the framework of the outreach strategy and build closer collaboration with various partners to further advance its implementation.

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