





# 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

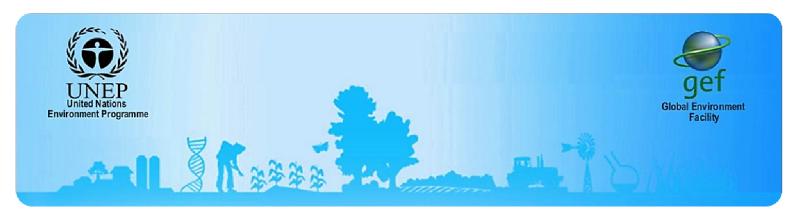
Sixth meeting Hyderabad, India, 1-5 October 2012

#### UNEP-GEF BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE ACTIVITIES REPORT

#### *Note by the Executive Secretary*

- 1. 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 "BCH2 project status summary report (June 2012)" produced by the UNEP-GEF project on continued enhancement of building capacity for effective participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH2 project).
- 2. The document is being circulated in the form and language in which it was received by the Secretariat.

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UNEP-GEF project on continued enhancement of building capacity for effective participation in the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH2 project)

BCH2 project status summary report (June 2012)

# **Abbreviations**

ABNE African Biosafety Network of Expertise

BCH Biosafety Clearing House

CBD Convention on Biological Diversity

COP-MOP Conference of the Parties Serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena

Protocol on Biosafety

CPB Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

DELC Division of Environmental Law and Conventions

GEF Global Environment Facility

ICCP Intergovernmental Committee on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

NBF National Biosafety FrameworkNGO Non-Governmental OrganizationSSFA Small-Scale Funding Agreements

UNEP United Nations Environment Programme

# **Executive summary**

In paragraph 11 of decision BS-V/2, the parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety invited other governments to identify their needs regarding national biosafety clearing-house nodes in a detailed manner through the Biosafety Clearing-House, and requested the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), through the ongoing project for continued enhancement of building capacity for effective participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH-II project), and the Executive Secretary to provide the necessary support for the needs identified.

In paragraph 14 of that same decision, the parties requested UNEP, through the BCH-II project, to promote capacity-building activities at the global, regional and, in particular, subregional levels in order to increase exchange of experiences among different countries.

Pursuant to that decision, UNEP executed the BCH-II capacity-building project with the objective "to continue assisting eligible countries in strengthening national capacities to effectively access and use the BCH, promoting regional and subregional collaboration, networking and exchange of experience for national and regional BCH management".

In collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), UNEP has delivered more than 90 national training workshops in 46 participating countries with the active involvement and participation of more than 916 institutions from public, private, academic institutions and civil society, with special emphasis on stakeholder groups identified by parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB) as of particular importance and, therefore, as those that should be targeted by new national training events.

In addition, five regional workshops were conducted to enhance the capacity of BCH national focal points during the period 2011–2012. These workshops were attended by a total of 69 participants, representing 51 countries: 12 from the Asia-Pacific region, 9 from Latin America, 1 from Central and Eastern Europe, 13 from francophone Africa, 10 from anglophone Africa and 6 from the Caribbean. During the five regional training workshops more than 90 new basic records were registered at the BCH II central portal, and 51 BCH II national focal points were trained.

The global workshops provided the participants with the opportunity to share experience and discuss the current status of their biosafety frameworks, with specific emphasis on the Biosafety Clearing-House, and to consider how to promote the sustainability of BCH-related functions within the responsible government agencies.

As requested in paragraph 9 of decision BS-IV/2, adopted at the fourth meeting of COP-MOP, the Secretariat and the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Clearing-House project facilitated the offer of the Republic of Korea to organize and sponsor a subregional workshop to build capacity in the use of the Biosafety Clearing-House. Accordingly, a training workshop for biosafety clearing-house national focal points in the Asia-Pacific region and in Central and Eastern Europe was held at the Research Institute of Bioscience and Biotechnology in Daejeon, Republic of Korea, from 24 to 28 October 2011.

UNEP was also requested, through the BCH II project, to produce further guidance on the Biosafety Clearing-House, in collaboration with the Executive Secretary, with special attention to the various target stakeholders (such as government officials, the media, the general public, members of civil society organizations and others) and to categories of potential users that had been identified as being least aware of the Biosafety Clearing-House. Pursuant to this decision,

UNEP has updated and translated into five official languages of the United Nations training materials for government officials, the media, the general public and members of civil society organizations, among others. In addition, UNEP has produced new training materials for customs and phytosanitary officers (curricula, a manual and case studies), along with a new module on registering decisions and risk assessments. All the BCH training materials have been published directly on the BCH central portal. Furthermore, CD copies of all BCH training materials have been developed and distributed at all national and regional workshops (more than 2,500 copies have already been distributed).

UNEP established a virtual learning platform to help BCH-II participating countries exchange their training experiences and store all training materials used during their regional or national training workshops. Each regional training workshop has its own page electronically available on Moodle<sup>1</sup> and, upon request, each BCH-II participating country may have its own national training workshop page made available for all stakeholders.

Between 1 July 2011 and 31 May 2012, more than 2,050 users from more than 100 countries have used this virtual learning platform to access the BCH training materials, with more than 82,000 visits to virtual course pages. Soon the platform will also include several webinars about the BCH-related issues and activities which appear to be in greatest demand. These include the following: introduction to the Cartagena Protocol; registering national and reference information; finding information with the help of the BCH practical problem-solving tools; management by national authorized users; national biosafety website development, using the Hermes tool provided by the CBD Secretariat; and integrating BCH information into websites using the Ajax plug-in.

As a direct outcome of the project, all participating countries from the Asia-Pacific and Latin America regions have published at least one record under the rubric of "Biosafety law, regulations or guideline records", while participating countries from anglophone and francophone Africa demonstrated lower percentages (90 per cent and 78 per cent, respectively). Moreover, all participating countries from the anglophone Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America regions and most participating countries from the francophone Africa region (75 per cent) have nominated at least one competent national authority.

During this period the project helped maintain and strengthen the network of regional advisors. It is worth mentioning that the assistance rendered by regional advisors to countries was not limited to the BCH, but extended to other relevant biosafety activities, such as the submission of second national reports on the implementation of the Protocol, and even some national biosafety framework implementation projects.

As capacity-building was completed at the national level during the first two training workshops with the assistance of regional advisors, more than 30 additional national training workshops have now been carried out by local national staff without the direct involvement of regional advisors.

Under the project, 14 countries had additional one-day training sessions specifically designed for their academic sectors to deliver specific training on BCH and to facilitate use of the training materials in their regular curricula. During the regional workshops, a catalogue of biosafety-related university courses in participating countries was developed and compiled in a special report. More than 10 tertiary institutions from different project countries included BCH training materials in at least one course.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Moodle is a free source e-learning software platform, also known as a Course Management System, Learning Management System, or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

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# 1. Background

- 1.1. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB) entered into force on 11 September 2003, 90 days after the date of deposit of the fiftieth instrument of ratification by the Republic of Palau on 13 June 2003. The entry into force of the Protocol means that it is legally binding both at the international level and in the legal systems of consenting States. States are, therefore, obliged to comply with and implement all provisions of the Protocol.
- 1.2. Article 20 of the Protocol<sup>2</sup> established a biosafety clearing-house (BCH) in order to:
  - (a) Facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, living modified organisms; and
  - (b) Assist Parties to implement the Protocol, taking into account the special needs of developing country Parties, in particular the least developed and small island developing States among them, and countries with economies in transition as well as countries that are centres of origin and centres of genetic diversity.
- 1.3. The Protocol requires that countries enter and manage their own data in the BCH. It is imperative, therefore, that all countries have the capacity—equipment, tools and training—to fulfil their obligations vis-à-vis the BCH and to take advantage of its benefits.
- 1.4. The BCH has been conceptualized by parties as the main information system and vehicle of the CPB to publish pertinent information on biosafety regulations. The Intergovernmental Committee on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (ICCP), at its third meeting in April 2002, recognized "the importance of developing a fully functioning Biosafety Clearing-House by the time of entry into force of the Protocol, and of meeting the capacity needs of all countries with respect to implementation and use of the Biosafety Clearing-House."
- 1.5. In April 2004, following a three-year pilot phase, the BCH entered its operational phase. The modalities of operation of the BCH, as set out in an annex to decision BS I/3 adopted by the Conference of the Parties Serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol (COP-MOP) at its first meeting, from 23 to 27 February 2004, stipulates that the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) would administer the central portal of the BCH, including development and maintenance of the portal itself and of its constituent databases. The Secretariat of CBD, with technical oversight and advice from the Informal Advisory Committee, and in response to user requests and requirements, has implemented numerous improvements and added functionality, in compliance with the multi-year programme of work (annex to decision BS II/2). The BCH has consequently evolved into a highly functional, user-friendly information repository and tool for parties to use in the implementation of their information-sharing obligations under the CPB and to support their decision-making on biosafety issues.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The text of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety can be found at http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/text/.

# 2. Introduction

- 2.1. Despite the availability of the BCH to countries, Parties have encountered many challenges in fulfilling their BCH-related obligations. Consequently, many years after the entry into force of the CPB, the information available on the BCH central portal remains limited, signalling the need for strategic and catalytic action to boost country participation in the BCH.
- 2.2. The first BCH project was a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)-Global Environment Facility (GEF) venture, and was designed and executed as an add-on project to the national biosafety framework (NBF) development project that took place in some 130 countries. Its primary focus as a GEF enabling activity was to provide technical training and infrastructure to help countries reach compliance with Article 20 of the CPB. The BCH project dealt with building national infrastructure to access the BCH, assisted countries in choosing their national participation option and assisted parties in meeting their obligations to the BCH.
- 2.3. The first BCH project implemented more than 400 national workshops, 17 regional and subregional workshops held at venues across the world, and six global workshops. Through these workshops more than 3,200 persons from 139 countries received training, including national BCH focal points, as well as representatives from various government ministries, academic and research institutions, and the private sector. Over 60 persons received training as regional advisors at five different training-of-trainer courses, of which 45 remained involved at the time of project closure. The regional advisors actively participated in the majority of the above-mentioned national, regional and global BCH workshops. In addition, a comprehensive capacity-building and training package has been developed for a variety of stakeholders, including the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia, industry, journalists, decision makers and others, and has been used during national, subregional and global workshops.
- 2.4. During the fourth meeting of the COP-MOP, parties requested an extension of the UNEP-GEF BCH project, and identified specific needs, such as providing and updating additional data on the BCH, continued subregional knowledge-sharing activities, and expansion of training packages to include other articles of the CPB, and also to target specific stakeholders such as custom officers, in addition to furthering the work that had already been carried out. These needs particularly address previously unanticipated gaps in the areas of knowledge and information-sharing at both national and subregional levels with the objective of publishing pertinent information on the BCH. In decision MOP BS-IV/5 COP/MOP-4, parties also urged GEF "to extend the UNEP-GEF BCH project in its current form as a global project with a view to ensuring sustainability of national BCH nodes ... and providing more capacity-building support".
- 2.5. The BCH2 project was developed as a direct response to the needs identified by the parties and in close collaboration with the CBD Secretariat. It was presented to the GEF Council at the 28 August 2009 meeting. The Council approved the project in principle and final clearance was received from the GEF Secretariat in February 2010, supporting the participation of 50 eligible countries. The project was launched on 15 November 2010 and is executed by UNEP's Division of Environmental Law and Conventions (DELC).
- 2.6. On 15 December, 2009, letters explaining eligibility rules and selection criteria were sent to eligible parties. As of 10 August, 2010, 50 eligible countries (23 in Africa, 1 in Central and Eastern Europe, 11 in the Asia-Pacific region, 6 in the Caribbean and 9 in Latin America) sent letters from their GEF operational focal points indicating the wish of their country to participate in the project. As at June 2012, 49 eligible countries had signed small-scale

# 3. BCH2 project objectives

- 3.1. The objective of this project is to continue assisting eligible countries in building their national capacity to effectively access and use the BCH, and to promote regional and subregional collaboration, networking and exchange of experience for national and regional BCH management.
- 3.2. The BCH2 project was formulated in the light of the needs identified by countries on many occasions. While building upon and extending the success of the first BCH project, it emphasizes more strongly specific strategies for the sustainability of BCH functions after the lifetime of the project. It consists of the following components:
  - (a) Subregional networking and knowledge sharing of information for effective management of the BCH: Under this component, BCH focal points participate in regional workshops and electronic forums, sharing experiences, consolidating regional networks and receiving new training materials developed by the project;
  - (b) Continued in-depth fine-tuning, development and global dissemination of knowledge-sharing training packages on the BCH in five of the United Nations official languages (Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish). New subject matter is covered in these training courses in response to specific requests by countries regarding their training needs, and to accommodate new target audiences;
  - (c) Continuation of the BCH regional advisor system: As with the first BCH project, regional advisors assist countries in planning, developing and delivering training workshops. Through a workshop and online training tools, the regional advisors first received training to bring them up to date on new BCH developments, and also on the use of new training materials, as they are developed. Active participation from the countries is encouraged to ensure that transfer of expertise is achieved.
  - (d) Extension of national-level learning events to stakeholders not already trained through the BCH project: This includes hosting a series of national workshops for new biosafety stakeholder groups, similar to the training activities conducted under the first BCH project. Based on needs expressed by countries, new stakeholder groups (such as customs and phytosanitary officers) are targeted to create a broader constituency for biosafety. The active engagement of the academic sector is also seen as a key strategy for countries to internalize and integrate biosafety and BCH-related topics into the national agenda.
  - (e) Support for the establishment and internalization of the BCH focal point role and of other BCH information-sharing roles (such as BCH national authorized users) in the job descriptions of participating country representatives: The project is designed to promote the sustainability of BCH-related functions within the responsible government agencies. In order to encourage the institutionalization of the roles of the national BCH focal points and other national authorized users, the project promotes the integration of these roles into government job descriptions.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The SSFA is the legal instrument used between a country and UNEP for national-level activities.

# 4. Project activities 2011-2012

- 4.1. The project received final approval in October 2010 and was assigned a start date by UNEP of 15 November 2010. To meet the objectives of the project, the following activities and strategies have been under continuous implementation:
  - (a) Maintaining and strengthening the regional advisors network;
  - (b) Fine-tuning, development and global dissemination of knowledge-sharing training packages;
  - (c) Building national capacity to use the BCH;
  - (d) Promoting regional and subregional collaboration;
  - (e) Providing for sustainability.
- 4.2. These activities and strategies are explained in more detail in the following sections.

### A. Maintaining and strengthening the regional advisors network

- 4.3. The BCH regional advisors network was conceived by the first BCH project as a means of creating a corps of expertise on the Protocol and the BCH at the regional level. Regional advisors render assistance and training services to countries and provide prompt responses to their practical concerns about daily issues on their national BCH. There is a defined need to continue facilitating regional and national knowledge-sharing measures, such as platforms and seminars, and to continuously update the current BCH regional advisors on a yearly basis to assist parties as they make all the information available on the BCH. The BCH2 project has helped in maintaining and strengthening this network.
- 4.4. A UNEP-GEF workshop to train regional advisors in the renewed operations and content of the BCH was held in Canada in January 2011. The workshop was attended by 32 BCH regional advisors, who, through this project, are delivering training on the BCH to participating countries. The main training components involved a thorough revision of all the features currently available through the BCH, together with a close analysis of the project details. The training also incorporated group work and feedback on improvements to the BCH. Brief biographies of the regional advisors may be found at the internet site <a href="http://www.unep.org/delc/advisors/tabid/54582/Default.aspx">http://www.unep.org/delc/advisors/tabid/54582/Default.aspx</a>.
- 4.5. Assistance by regional advisors to countries is not limited to the BCH2 project, but is extended to other relevant biosafety initiatives, such as assisting countries with the preparation of their second national report on the implementation of the Protocol, the implementation of national biosafety framework projects, or the training of national regional BCH focal points as direct request from the parties.
- 4.6. To date the regional advisors have participated in more than 125 missions. They have also supported the development, updating and translation of a large number of training materials.

# B. Fine-tuning, development and global dissemination of knowledge-sharing training packages

4.7. The BCH1 project developed training materials for different stakeholder groups, including competent national authorities, NGOs, civil society, industry, universities and scientific institutions, biosafety organizations, customs and border control, the media and the general public. The training package is designed as a series of modules and training tools that can be combined in different sets according to the training needs and interest of the users.

- 4.8. The BCH2 project maintained and is updating these materials in all official languages of the United Nations to fit with the revamped version of the BCH. It also added training resources for additional sectors to support structured training courses.
- 4.9. At the time of reporting, 92 per cent of all the training materials have been updated (more than 75 documents in each of the five official languages, which include 10 curricula and guides, 13 manuals, 32 case studies, 2 interactive modules, 14 ready reference guides, and 5 quizzes and discussion points). New training materials for customs and phytosanitary officers (curriculum, manual and case studies) and a new module on registering decisions and risk assessments have been developed and are currently under review. All the BCH training materials are published directly on the BCH central portal. Furthermore, CD copies of all BCH training materials have been developed and distributed at all national and regional workshops (to date, more than 2,500 copies have already been distributed).
- 4.10. The training package can be found on the BCH central portal at the address <a href="http://bch.cbd.int/help/topics/en/webframe.html?Training\_Materials.html">http://bch.cbd.int/help/topics/en/webframe.html?Training\_Materials.html</a>, as part of the integrated, context-sensitive "Help" section, and can be downloaded at any time by anyone in the world. It is also accessible through <a href="http://moodle.bch2project.org">http://moodle.bch2project.org</a> with a guest login.
- 4.11. In attempt to share knowledge among the regional advisors and participating countries, an open-source knowledge sharing platform known as "Moodle" has been set-up by the BCH team. Moodle is a course management system: a free, open-source software package designed on sound pedagogical principles, to help educators create effective online learning communities.
- 4.12. The Moodle platform stores all training materials, including specific inputs used during the regional or national training workshops, storyboards, agendas, digital presentations, discussion sessions, lists of participants, and other resources. In addition, each regional training workshop has its own page on Moodle and, upon request, each BCH-II participating country may have its own national training workshop page on Moodle.
- 4.13. Moodle is made available to the public at <a href="http://moodle.bch2project.org">http://moodle.bch2project.org</a> and anyone may sign in as a guest and gain access to information. Access to the private site is password protected, however. Moodle offers five global public BCH courses containing all BCH training materials in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish. It also contains more than 24 national specific BCH training courses and five regional training courses.
- 4.14. Since 1 July 2011, more than 1,900 users from some 100 countries have used the virtual learning platform to access BCH training materials, and there have been more than 80,000 visits to virtual course pages. Soon, Moodle will display some webinars about the BCH-related issues and activities which appear to be in greatest demand, which include the following: introduction to the Cartagena Protocol; registering national and reference information; finding information with the help of the BCH practical problem-solving tools; management by national authorized users; national biosafety website development, using the Hermes tool provided by the CBD Secretariat; integrating BCH information into websites using the Ajax plug-in from the CBD Secretariat, and others.

## C. Building national capacity to use the BCH

4.15. The BCH2 project, like its predecessor, has the primary objective of building capacity to use the BCH. It did so by engaging key government agencies responsible for CPB implementation while also broadening stakeholder involvement to include the private sector, academia, scientists, civil society and the media. Special emphasis was also given to stakeholder groups identified by parties to the CPB as of particular importance and, accordingly, those which should be targeted by new national training events.

4.16. To date 90 out of 100 national training workshops have been conducted by the regional advisors in 49 participating countries with the active involvement of some 945 national institutions. The average increase in participants' knowledge directly attributable to training under the project was estimated at around 33 per cent.

#### D. Promoting regional and subregional collaboration

- 4.17. Using hybrid national and regional mechanisms, the BCH2 project promotes regional and subregional collaboration, networking and the exchange of experience for national and regional BCH management. In addition to the established advocacy system of regional advisors, various communication tools such as online forums, real-time conferences and Moodle are being offered to help regional cooperation. Regional networking assists in developing a body of materials, resources and expertise, with a view to creating a learning environment conducive to the acquisition of experience and disseminating lessons learned.
- 4.18. As part of the BCH2 project, five regional workshops for BCH national focal points were conducted in collaboration with the CBD Secretariat. These were attended by a total of 69 participants, representing 51 countries: 12 from the Asia-Pacific region, 9 from Latin America, 1 from Central and Eastern Europe, 13 from francophone Africa and 10 from anglophone Africa. The workshops provided the participants with the opportunity to share experience and discuss the current status of their biosafety frameworks, with special emphasis on the Biosafety Clearing House, and to consider how to promote the sustainability of BCH-related functions within the responsible government agencies.

#### E. Providing for sustainability

- 4.19. While building upon and extending the success of the first BCH project, the BCH2 project placed even stronger emphasis on specific strategies for the sustainability of BCH functions after the project's lifetime. Those strategies include:
  - (a) The training of trainers approach:
    - This was designed specifically to promote the replication of training events. The approach ensures that, during training, not only is the relevant technical knowledge transferred but also the ability to replicate the training event itself. As an essential complement to this approach, an array of training materials is provided, organized into thematic modules. The availability of these materials greatly facilitates the replication of BCH training workshops by national agencies and will remain as a training resource after the life of the project;
    - To date, 25 national training workshops have been conducted exclusively by local national staff, without the direct involvement of regional advisors;
  - (b) Promoting the role of academia in mainstreaming biosafety issues:
    - The BCH2 project directly encourages and facilitates the adoption of BCH training
      materials and topics into national academic curricula, in particular at the tertiary
      level. This will ensure that the knowledge created through the project will remain
      permanently in the individual countries and regions as part of academic
      programmes, enabling national capacity in these topics to be sustained after the
      lifetime of the project;
    - Under the project, one-day training measures were carried out for 11 countries, specifically designed for their academic sectors to deliver specific training on BCH and to facilitate use of the training materials in their regular curricula. During the

regional workshops, a catalogue of biosafety-related university courses in participating countries was developed;<sup>4</sup>

- (c) Supporting the establishment of information-sharing roles and their internalization in the job descriptions of participating country representatives:
  - Integrating BCH data entry and data validation functions as routine tasks in the work of the civil servants concerned, thereby ensuring that those exercises become a standing obligation of the government. For BCH country obligations to be fully incorporated into government responsibilities, however, it is essential that national biosafety frameworks are fully implemented. Operationalizing the frameworks will establish the legal mandate and administrative wherewithal for BCH-related tasks to be executed consistently in the long term;
  - The obligations to share information on the BCH (article 20 of the CPB) and the critical role played by the BCH focal points (decision COP-MOP1 BS-I/3) and national authorized users in entering national data into the BCH are highlighted at all stages of the training activities. A direct outcome of this approach was the nomination of 64 national authorized users.

# 5. Indicators for measuring the BCH2 project effectiveness

5.1. The information made available on the BCH central portal serves as a useful indicator for the effectiveness of the BCH2 project. The total number of published records in participating countries increased by 61 per cent, compared to the 39 per cent of such records in eligible non-participating countries. In addition, the percentage increase in updated records in participating countries measured 73 per cent, as against the 27 per cent increase in eligible non-participating countries.



5.2. Requirements pursuant to Article 20 paragraph 3<sup>5</sup> are all obligatory, this means is that if a party has no information unless it indicates so, it is considered non-compliant.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>A consolidated report on the BCH2 regional workshops for national focal points may be found athttps://anubis.unep.org/documents/doc\_viewatt.php?doc\_id= 35314&sub\_id=1041.

- 5.3. The main category of records published and updated on the BCH Central Portal by BCH2 participating countries are the so-called basic records, i.e. National Contacts: CPB and BCH-NFPs, Competent National Authorities, and Art.17 National Contact for emergency measures. The second categories of records published are National Records relevant for the implementation of the Protocol, i.e. Laws, Regulations, decisions when they are available. After capacity building activities, we noted that several countries uploaded Decisions and Risk Assessments such as India, Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam, Costa Rica, Honduras and Burkina Faso.
- 5.4. The indicators for measuring the BCH2 effectiveness are:
- i) the increase in the total number of records (61% for participating countries versus 39% for non-participating countries) and;
- ii) the number of updated records (73% versus 27%).
- 5.5. For BCH-NFPs, there are not so significant turn-overs, neither for RAs; and most of times, turn-overs at the country level have been either beneficial for the national BCH or have ensured continuity with previous National BCH team. Since 2005 in Latin-American and the Caribbean regions no significant turnovers of BCH NFPs have occurred within BCH2 project participating countries while in Africa and Asia it is estimated to be less than 25%. As explained before, in some cases it has resulted more beneficial or having continuity because new national BCH NFPs improve nBCH status (Benin) or keep good relations with previous ones (Senegal, Togo).
- 5.6. Nevertheless, due to unavoidable circumstances of potential BCH NFPs turnover, the BCH2 project is implementing several strategies to overcome these changes and promote sustainability of national BCH and BCH-NFPs role:
  - a) Disseminating BCHknowledge and training Materials amongst national stakeholders ensures BCH networking beyond the duration of the project (for example, with academic sector and new stakeholders) have benefited from the wide range of training materials.
  - b) Emphasize BCH-NFP role in implementing the Protocol and integration of its role in its official job description.
  - c) In order to ensure a stand-alone BCH Training for all, and in addition to the existent training manuals available at the BCH Central Portal, a new virtual training course is in preparation. The main objective of these webinar series is to deliver constantly to parties a basic tool kit explaining the roles and responsibilities of the BCH NFP
  - d) Finally, during regional and global BCH Training workshops, countries are associated to our initiatives and provide their feed-back on innovative strategies to ensure sustainability; during the COP/MOP 6 a session is planned to receive additional feedback from participant and non-participant countries. In addition, we have introduced the BCH on BCH forum in collaboration with the SCBD as a platform to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Article 20, Para.3:- Without prejudice to the protection of confidential information, each Party shall make available to the Biosafety Clearing-House any information required to be made available to the Biosafety Clearing-House under this Protocol, and:

<sup>(</sup>a)Any existing laws, regulations and guidelines for implementation of the Protocol, as well as information required by the Parties for the advance informed agreement procedure;

<sup>(</sup>b) Any bilateral, regional and multilateral agreements and arrangements;

<sup>(</sup>c) Summaries of its risk assessments or environmental reviews of living modified organisms generated by its regulatory process, and carried out in accordance with Article 15, including, where appropriate, relevant information regarding products thereof, namely, processed materials that are of living modified organism origin, containing detectable novel combinations of replicable genetic material obtained through the use of modern biotechnology;

<sup>(</sup>d) Its final decisions regarding the importation or release of living modified organisms; and (e)Reports submitted by it pursuant to Article 33, including those on implementation of the advance informed agreement procedure.

nurture and continuously create a forum for BCH NFPs as part of sustaining the learning process.

5.7. All planned regional workshops and 90 per cent of the planned national workshops have been conducted by the project team. Feedback from the training participants was positive. The average increase in participants' knowledge directly attributable to their training under the project was estimated at 33 per cent. The team and the network of regional advisors are very well established with an estimated turnover of RAs of less than 10%. In the event of RAs gaps at sub-regional level, the regional specialist act as backup and on site trainer of new regional advisors.

# 6. Collaboration with partners

6.1. The BCH team has been engaging with partners to ensure that the project builds upon the work already being carried out by others and is able to harness the lessons learned and practices developed in previous work.

#### Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

- 6.2. The BCH2 project is implemented by UNEP in close cooperation with the CBD Secretariat acting as a technical partner. Management and technical personnel from both the CBD Secretariat and the project collaborate in planning and executing project activities. Through regional and global networks the Secretariat provides direct technical assistance to the regional advisors and to parties in the use of the BCH, along with the Hermes and Ajax tools<sup>6</sup>. The SCBD in collaboration with the UNEP project team backstops on a on a continuous basis use of the developed tools via electronic media and forums. The Secretariat also attends global and regional workshops hosted by the project for the specific purpose of providing training on the BCH, Hermes and Ajax, focusing in particular on new developments under the CPB, updated BCH functionality and revised common formats for national information.
- 6.3. The CBD Secretariat receives project support at COP-MOP side events in the form of assistance from regional advisors in conducting BCH training workshops. It also publishes the training materials developed by the project on the BCH central portal help system, thus promoting its global dissemination and providing a permanent home for these materials.

#### **Project Steering Committee**

6.4. The overall project performance of BCH2 is under the supervision of a Project Steering Committee. It comprises representatives of the UNEP Division of Environmental Policy Implementation (DEPI) (as the chair), UNEP-Division of Environmental Law and Conventions (DELC), the CBD Secretariat, the United Nations University, the Third World Network and the Global Industry Coalition. The Committee is responsible for guiding the overall implementation of the project and serves as the primary decision-making body to which the Project Manager will report.

#### Support for Capacity Building for BCH

6.5. Countries have offered to contribute to the development and execution of aspects of the training for the BCH regional workshops. The Government of the Republic of Korea contributed

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Hermes is a completed online Content Management System which provides the building blocks of a national BCH and BCH AJAX Plug-in is a client side application, developed by the BCH Team, that can be easily integrated with any existing website to provide dynamic display of information from the BCH.

towards the organization and sponsorship of non-participating countries to the subregional workshop for the Asia-Pacific region and Central and Eastern Europe. The African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE) of the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development sponsored the attendance of three non-participating countries at the anglophone Africa workshop. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran similarly offered to host one subregional workshop.

# 7. Conclusions

- 7.1. To date, small-scale founding agreements have been signed with 49 countries,<sup>7</sup> and 59 of the 139 eligible countries have participated in project activities. Thanks to support from national and international agencies, participation in project activities has been extended to 10 more countries.<sup>8</sup>
- 7.2. In all, 90 national training workshops have been conducted by regional advisors in 46 participating countries for 916 national institutions. As a direct result of project intervention, the average increase in participants' knowledge has been estimated at 33 per cent.
- 7.3. The project design and much of the investment have been focused on mobilizing central resources in the form of training modules, on making electronic forums publicly available and on providing on-site assistance from the regional advisors. Significant advances have been made in strengthening national capacity to fulfil BCH obligations under the Cartagena Protocol.
- 7.4. The regional advisors' network has proved to be a powerful tool in the project's task of tackling national and regional BCH issues; while performing on-site assistance and contributing to the design and dissemination of training materials, it has also played a cardinal role in promoting regional and subregional collaboration, networking and the exchange of experience for BCH management.
- 7.5. BCH data entry and data validation functions still need to be officially incorporated in the job description of the relevant civil servants. For BCH country obligations to be fully assimilated into government responsibilities, it is essential that national biosafety frameworks are fully implemented. Operationalizing the frameworks will establish the legal mandate and administrative wherewithal for BCH-related tasks to be executed consistently in the long term.
- 7.6. Implementation of CPB and related BCH obligations has gained much from the BCH2 project but still relies on the continuous provision of support to developing country parties, in particular the least developed and small island developing States among them, and to parties with economies in transition, including through existing global, regional, subregional and national institutions and organizations and, as appropriate, through facilitating private sector involvement (Article22 of the Protocol). Limitations observed thus far in participation in the BCH are often the consequence of national and regional constraints beyond the scope and control of the project.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, India, Jordan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Malaysia, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Moldova, Senegal, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint. Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo, Tonga, Tunisia, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam and Yemen.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>China, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kenya, Mozambique, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Uganda.



UNEP-GEF project on continued enhancement of building capacity for effective participation in the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH2 project)

BCH2 project status summary report (June 2012)

# **Abbreviations**

ABNE African Biosafety Network of Expertise

BCH Biosafety Clearing House

CBD Convention on Biological Diversity

COP-MOP Conference of the Parties Serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena

Protocol on Biosafety

CPB Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

DELC Division of Environmental Law and Conventions

GEF Global Environment Facility

ICCP Intergovernmental Committee on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

NBF National Biosafety FrameworkNGO Non-Governmental OrganizationSSFA Small-Scale Funding Agreements

UNEP United Nations Environment Programme

# **Executive summary**

In paragraph 11 of decision BS-V/2, the parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety invited other governments to identify their needs regarding national biosafety clearing-house nodes in a detailed manner through the Biosafety Clearing-House, and requested the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), through the ongoing project for continued enhancement of building capacity for effective participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH-II project), and the Executive Secretary to provide the necessary support for the needs identified.

In paragraph 14 of that same decision, the parties requested UNEP, through the BCH-II project, to promote capacity-building activities at the global, regional and, in particular, subregional levels in order to increase exchange of experiences among different countries.

Pursuant to that decision, UNEP executed the BCH-II capacity-building project with the objective "to continue assisting eligible countries in strengthening national capacities to effectively access and use the BCH, promoting regional and subregional collaboration, networking and exchange of experience for national and regional BCH management".

In collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), UNEP has delivered more than 90 national training workshops in 46 participating countries with the active involvement and participation of more than 916 institutions from public, private, academic institutions and civil society, with special emphasis on stakeholder groups identified by parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB) as of particular importance and, therefore, as those that should be targeted by new national training events.

In addition, five regional workshops were conducted to enhance the capacity of BCH national focal points during the period 2011–2012. These workshops were attended by a total of 69 participants, representing 51 countries: 12 from the Asia-Pacific region, 9 from Latin America, 1 from Central and Eastern Europe, 13 from francophone Africa, 10 from anglophone Africa and 6 from the Caribbean. During the five regional training workshops more than 90 new basic records were registered at the BCH II central portal, and 51 BCH II national focal points were trained.

The global workshops provided the participants with the opportunity to share experience and discuss the current status of their biosafety frameworks, with specific emphasis on the Biosafety Clearing-House, and to consider how to promote the sustainability of BCH-related functions within the responsible government agencies.

As requested in paragraph 9 of decision BS-IV/2, adopted at the fourth meeting of COP-MOP, the Secretariat and the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Clearing-House project facilitated the offer of the Republic of Korea to organize and sponsor a subregional workshop to build capacity in the use of the Biosafety Clearing-House. Accordingly, a training workshop for biosafety clearing-house national focal points in the Asia-Pacific region and in Central and Eastern Europe was held at the Research Institute of Bioscience and Biotechnology in Daejeon, Republic of Korea, from 24 to 28 October 2011.

UNEP was also requested, through the BCH II project, to produce further guidance on the Biosafety Clearing-House, in collaboration with the Executive Secretary, with special attention to the various target stakeholders (such as government officials, the media, the general public, members of civil society organizations and others) and to categories of potential users that had been identified as being least aware of the Biosafety Clearing-House. Pursuant to this decision,

UNEP has updated and translated into five official languages of the United Nations training materials for government officials, the media, the general public and members of civil society organizations, among others. In addition, UNEP has produced new training materials for customs and phytosanitary officers (curricula, a manual and case studies), along with a new module on registering decisions and risk assessments. All the BCH training materials have been published directly on the BCH central portal. Furthermore, CD copies of all BCH training materials have been developed and distributed at all national and regional workshops (more than 2,500 copies have already been distributed).

UNEP established a virtual learning platform to help BCH-II participating countries exchange their training experiences and store all training materials used during their regional or national training workshops. Each regional training workshop has its own page electronically available on Moodle<sup>1</sup> and, upon request, each BCH-II participating country may have its own national training workshop page made available for all stakeholders.

Between 1 July 2011 and 31 May 2012, more than 2,050 users from more than 100 countries have used this virtual learning platform to access the BCH training materials, with more than 82,000 visits to virtual course pages. Soon the platform will also include several webinars about the BCH-related issues and activities which appear to be in greatest demand. These include the following: introduction to the Cartagena Protocol; registering national and reference information; finding information with the help of the BCH practical problem-solving tools; management by national authorized users; national biosafety website development, using the Hermes tool provided by the CBD Secretariat; and integrating BCH information into websites using the Ajax plug-in.

As a direct outcome of the project, all participating countries from the Asia-Pacific and Latin America regions have published at least one record under the rubric of "Biosafety law, regulations or guideline records", while participating countries from anglophone and francophone Africa demonstrated lower percentages (90 per cent and 78 per cent, respectively). Moreover, all participating countries from the anglophone Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America regions and most participating countries from the francophone Africa region (75 per cent) have nominated at least one competent national authority.

During this period the project helped maintain and strengthen the network of regional advisors. It is worth mentioning that the assistance rendered by regional advisors to countries was not limited to the BCH, but extended to other relevant biosafety activities, such as the submission of second national reports on the implementation of the Protocol, and even some national biosafety framework implementation projects.

As capacity-building was completed at the national level during the first two training workshops with the assistance of regional advisors, more than 30 additional national training workshops have now been carried out by local national staff without the direct involvement of regional advisors.

Under the project, 14 countries had additional one-day training sessions specifically designed for their academic sectors to deliver specific training on BCH and to facilitate use of the training materials in their regular curricula. During the regional workshops, a catalogue of biosafety-related university courses in participating countries was developed and compiled in a special report. More than 10 tertiary institutions from different project countries included BCH training materials in at least one course.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Moodle is a free source e-learning software platform, also known as a Course Management System, Learning Management System, or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

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# 1. Background

- 1.1. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB) entered into force on 11 September 2003, 90 days after the date of deposit of the fiftieth instrument of ratification by the Republic of Palau on 13 June 2003. The entry into force of the Protocol means that it is legally binding both at the international level and in the legal systems of consenting States. States are, therefore, obliged to comply with and implement all provisions of the Protocol.
- 1.2. Article 20 of the Protocol<sup>2</sup> established a biosafety clearing-house (BCH) in order to:
  - (a) Facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, living modified organisms; and
  - (b) Assist Parties to implement the Protocol, taking into account the special needs of developing country Parties, in particular the least developed and small island developing States among them, and countries with economies in transition as well as countries that are centres of origin and centres of genetic diversity.
- 1.3. The Protocol requires that countries enter and manage their own data in the BCH. It is imperative, therefore, that all countries have the capacity—equipment, tools and training—to fulfil their obligations vis-à-vis the BCH and to take advantage of its benefits.
- 1.4. The BCH has been conceptualized by parties as the main information system and vehicle of the CPB to publish pertinent information on biosafety regulations. The Intergovernmental Committee on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (ICCP), at its third meeting in April 2002, recognized "the importance of developing a fully functioning Biosafety Clearing-House by the time of entry into force of the Protocol, and of meeting the capacity needs of all countries with respect to implementation and use of the Biosafety Clearing-House."
- 1.5. In April 2004, following a three-year pilot phase, the BCH entered its operational phase. The modalities of operation of the BCH, as set out in an annex to decision BS I/3 adopted by the Conference of the Parties Serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol (COP-MOP) at its first meeting, from 23 to 27 February 2004, stipulates that the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) would administer the central portal of the BCH, including development and maintenance of the portal itself and of its constituent databases. The Secretariat of CBD, with technical oversight and advice from the Informal Advisory Committee, and in response to user requests and requirements, has implemented numerous improvements and added functionality, in compliance with the multi-year programme of work (annex to decision BS II/2). The BCH has consequently evolved into a highly functional, user-friendly information repository and tool for parties to use in the implementation of their information-sharing obligations under the CPB and to support their decision-making on biosafety issues.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The text of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety can be found at http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/text/.

# 2. Introduction

- 2.1. Despite the availability of the BCH to countries, Parties have encountered many challenges in fulfilling their BCH-related obligations. Consequently, many years after the entry into force of the CPB, the information available on the BCH central portal remains limited, signalling the need for strategic and catalytic action to boost country participation in the BCH.
- 2.2. The first BCH project was a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)-Global Environment Facility (GEF) venture, and was designed and executed as an add-on project to the national biosafety framework (NBF) development project that took place in some 130 countries. Its primary focus as a GEF enabling activity was to provide technical training and infrastructure to help countries reach compliance with Article 20 of the CPB. The BCH project dealt with building national infrastructure to access the BCH, assisted countries in choosing their national participation option and assisted parties in meeting their obligations to the BCH.
- 2.3. The first BCH project implemented more than 400 national workshops, 17 regional and subregional workshops held at venues across the world, and six global workshops. Through these workshops more than 3,200 persons from 139 countries received training, including national BCH focal points, as well as representatives from various government ministries, academic and research institutions, and the private sector. Over 60 persons received training as regional advisors at five different training-of-trainer courses, of which 45 remained involved at the time of project closure. The regional advisors actively participated in the majority of the above-mentioned national, regional and global BCH workshops. In addition, a comprehensive capacity-building and training package has been developed for a variety of stakeholders, including the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia, industry, journalists, decision makers and others, and has been used during national, subregional and global workshops.
- 2.4. During the fourth meeting of the COP-MOP, parties requested an extension of the UNEP-GEF BCH project, and identified specific needs, such as providing and updating additional data on the BCH, continued subregional knowledge-sharing activities, and expansion of training packages to include other articles of the CPB, and also to target specific stakeholders such as custom officers, in addition to furthering the work that had already been carried out. These needs particularly address previously unanticipated gaps in the areas of knowledge and information-sharing at both national and subregional levels with the objective of publishing pertinent information on the BCH. In decision MOP BS-IV/5 COP/MOP-4, parties also urged GEF "to extend the UNEP-GEF BCH project in its current form as a global project with a view to ensuring sustainability of national BCH nodes ... and providing more capacity-building support".
- 2.5. The BCH2 project was developed as a direct response to the needs identified by the parties and in close collaboration with the CBD Secretariat. It was presented to the GEF Council at the 28 August 2009 meeting. The Council approved the project in principle and final clearance was received from the GEF Secretariat in February 2010, supporting the participation of 50 eligible countries. The project was launched on 15 November 2010 and is executed by UNEP's Division of Environmental Law and Conventions (DELC).
- 2.6. On 15 December, 2009, letters explaining eligibility rules and selection criteria were sent to eligible parties. As of 10 August, 2010, 50 eligible countries (23 in Africa, 1 in Central and Eastern Europe, 11 in the Asia-Pacific region, 6 in the Caribbean and 9 in Latin America) sent letters from their GEF operational focal points indicating the wish of their country to participate in the project. As at June 2012, 49 eligible countries had signed small-scale

# 3. BCH2 project objectives

- 3.1. The objective of this project is to continue assisting eligible countries in building their national capacity to effectively access and use the BCH, and to promote regional and subregional collaboration, networking and exchange of experience for national and regional BCH management.
- 3.2. The BCH2 project was formulated in the light of the needs identified by countries on many occasions. While building upon and extending the success of the first BCH project, it emphasizes more strongly specific strategies for the sustainability of BCH functions after the lifetime of the project. It consists of the following components:
  - (a) Subregional networking and knowledge sharing of information for effective management of the BCH: Under this component, BCH focal points participate in regional workshops and electronic forums, sharing experiences, consolidating regional networks and receiving new training materials developed by the project;
  - (b) Continued in-depth fine-tuning, development and global dissemination of knowledge-sharing training packages on the BCH in five of the United Nations official languages (Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish). New subject matter is covered in these training courses in response to specific requests by countries regarding their training needs, and to accommodate new target audiences;
  - (c) Continuation of the BCH regional advisor system: As with the first BCH project, regional advisors assist countries in planning, developing and delivering training workshops. Through a workshop and online training tools, the regional advisors first received training to bring them up to date on new BCH developments, and also on the use of new training materials, as they are developed. Active participation from the countries is encouraged to ensure that transfer of expertise is achieved.
  - (d) Extension of national-level learning events to stakeholders not already trained through the BCH project. This includes hosting a series of national workshops for new biosafety stakeholder groups, similar to the training activities conducted under the first BCH project. Based on needs expressed by countries, new stakeholder groups (such as customs and phytosanitary officers) are targeted to create a broader constituency for biosafety. The active engagement of the academic sector is also seen as a key strategy for countries to internalize and integrate biosafety and BCH-related topics into the national agenda.
  - (e) Support for the establishment and internalization of the BCH focal point role and of other BCH information-sharing roles (such as BCH national authorized users) in the job descriptions of participating country representatives: The project is designed to promote the sustainability of BCH-related functions within the responsible government agencies. In order to encourage the institutionalization of the roles of the national BCH focal points and other national authorized users, the project promotes the integration of these roles into government job descriptions.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The SSFA is the legal instrument used between a country and UNEP for national-level activities.

# 4. Project activities 2011–2012

- 4.1. The project received final approval in October 2010 and was assigned a start date by UNEP of 15 November 2010. To meet the objectives of the project, the following activities and strategies have been under continuous implementation:
  - (a) Maintaining and strengthening the regional advisors network;
  - (b) Fine-tuning, development and global dissemination of knowledge-sharing training packages;
  - (c) Building national capacity to use the BCH;
  - (d) Promoting regional and subregional collaboration;
  - (e) Providing for sustainability.
- 4.2. These activities and strategies are explained in more detail in the following sections.

#### A. Maintaining and strengthening the regional advisors network

- 4.3. The BCH regional advisors network was conceived by the first BCH project as a means of creating a corps of expertise on the Protocol and the BCH at the regional level. Regional advisors render assistance and training services to countries and provide prompt responses to their practical concerns about daily issues on their national BCH. There is a defined need to continue facilitating regional and national knowledge-sharing measures, such as platforms and seminars, and to continuously update the current BCH regional advisors on a yearly basis to assist parties as they make all the information available on the BCH. The BCH2 project has helped in maintaining and strengthening this network.
- 4.4. A UNEP-GEF workshop to train regional advisors in the renewed operations and content of the BCH was held in Canada in January 2011. The workshop was attended by 32 BCH regional advisors, who, through this project, are delivering training on the BCH to participating countries. The main training components involved a thorough revision of all the features currently available through the BCH, together with a close analysis of the project details. The training also incorporated group work and feedback on improvements to the BCH. Brief biographies of the regional advisors may be found at the internet site <a href="http://www.unep.org/delc/advisors/tabid/54582/Default.aspx">http://www.unep.org/delc/advisors/tabid/54582/Default.aspx</a>.
- 4.5. Assistance by regional advisors to countries is not limited to the BCH2 project, but is extended to other relevant biosafety initiatives, such as assisting countries with the preparation of their second national report on the implementation of the Protocol, the implementation of national biosafety framework projects, or the training of national regional BCH focal points as direct request from the parties.
- 4.6. To date the regional advisors have participated in more than 125 missions. They have also supported the development, updating and translation of a large number of training materials.

# B. Fine-tuning, development and global dissemination of knowledge-sharing training packages

4.7. The BCH1 project developed training materials for different stakeholder groups, including competent national authorities, NGOs, civil society, industry, universities and scientific institutions, biosafety organizations, customs and border control, the media and the general public. The training package is designed as a series of modules and training tools that can be combined in different sets according to the training needs and interest of the users.

- 4.8. The BCH2 project maintained and is updating these materials in all official languages of the United Nations to fit with the revamped version of the BCH. It also added training resources for additional sectors to support structured training courses.
- 4.9. At the time of reporting, 92 per cent of all the training materials have been updated (more than 75 documents in each of the five official languages, which include 10 curricula and guides, 13 manuals, 32 case studies, 2 interactive modules, 14 ready reference guides, and 5 quizzes and discussion points). New training materials for customs and phytosanitary officers (curriculum, manual and case studies) and a new module on registering decisions and risk assessments have been developed and are currently under review. All the BCH training materials are published directly on the BCH central portal. Furthermore, CD copies of all BCH training materials have been developed and distributed at all national and regional workshops (to date, more than 2,500 copies have already been distributed).
- 4.10. The training package can be found on the BCH central portal at the address <a href="http://bch.cbd.int/help/topics/en/webframe.html?Training\_Materials.html">http://bch.cbd.int/help/topics/en/webframe.html?Training\_Materials.html</a>, as part of the integrated, context-sensitive "Help" section, and can be downloaded at any time by anyone in the world. It is also accessible through <a href="http://moodle.bch2project.org">http://moodle.bch2project.org</a> with a guest login.
- 4.11. In attempt to share knowledge among the regional advisors and participating countries, an open-source knowledge sharing platform known as "Moodle" has been set-up by the BCH team. Moodle is a course management system: a free, open-source software package designed on sound pedagogical principles, to help educators create effective online learning communities.
- 4.12. The Moodle platform stores all training materials, including specific inputs used during the regional or national training workshops, storyboards, agendas, digital presentations, discussion sessions, lists of participants, and other resources. In addition, each regional training workshop has its own page on Moodle and, upon request, each BCH-II participating country may have its own national training workshop page on Moodle.
- 4.13. Moodle is made available to the public at <a href="http://moodle.bch2project.org">http://moodle.bch2project.org</a> and anyone may sign in as a guest and gain access to information. Access to the private site is password protected, however. Moodle offers five global public BCH courses containing all BCH training materials in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish. It also contains more than 24 national specific BCH training courses and five regional training courses.
- 4.14. Since 1 July 2011, more than 1,900 users from some 100 countries have used the virtual learning platform to access BCH training materials, and there have been more than 80,000 visits to virtual course pages. Soon, Moodle will display some webinars about the BCH-related issues and activities which appear to be in greatest demand, which include the following: introduction to the Cartagena Protocol; registering national and reference information; finding information with the help of the BCH practical problem-solving tools; management by national authorized users; national biosafety website development, using the Hermes tool provided by the CBD Secretariat; integrating BCH information into websites using the Ajax plug-in from the CBD Secretariat, and others.

#### C. Building national capacity to use the BCH

4.15. The BCH2 project, like its predecessor, has the primary objective of building capacity to use the BCH. It did so by engaging key government agencies responsible for CPB implementation while also broadening stakeholder involvement to include the private sector, academia, scientists, civil society and the media. Special emphasis was also given to stakeholder groups identified by parties to the CPB as of particular importance and, accordingly, those which should be targeted by new national training events.

4.16. To date 90 out of 100 national training workshops have been conducted by the regional advisors in 49 participating countries with the active involvement of some 945 national institutions. The average increase in participants' knowledge directly attributable to training under the project was estimated at around 33 per cent.

#### D. Promoting regional and subregional collaboration

- 4.17. Using hybrid national and regional mechanisms, the BCH2 project promotes regional and subregional collaboration, networking and the exchange of experience for national and regional BCH management. In addition to the established advocacy system of regional advisors, various communication tools such as online forums, real-time conferences and Moodle are being offered to help regional cooperation. Regional networking assists in developing a body of materials, resources and expertise, with a view to creating a learning environment conducive to the acquisition of experience and disseminating lessons learned.
- 4.18. As part of the BCH2 project, five regional workshops for BCH national focal points were conducted in collaboration with the CBD Secretariat. These were attended by a total of 69 participants, representing 51 countries: 12 from the Asia-Pacific region, 9 from Latin America, 1 from Central and Eastern Europe, 13 from francophone Africa and 10 from anglophone Africa. The workshops provided the participants with the opportunity to share experience and discuss the current status of their biosafety frameworks, with special emphasis on the Biosafety Clearing House, and to consider how to promote the sustainability of BCH-related functions within the responsible government agencies.

### E. Providing for sustainability

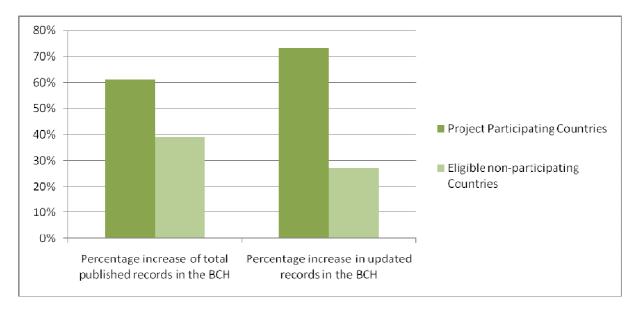
- 4.19. While building upon and extending the success of the first BCH project, the BCH2 project placed even stronger emphasis on specific strategies for the sustainability of BCH functions after the project's lifetime. Those strategies include:
  - (a) The training of trainers approach:
    - This was designed specifically to promote the replication of training events. The approach ensures that, during training, not only is the relevant technical knowledge transferred but also the ability to replicate the training event itself. As an essential complement to this approach, an array of training materials is provided, organized into thematic modules. The availability of these materials greatly facilitates the replication of BCH training workshops by national agencies and will remain as a training resource after the life of the project;
    - To date, 25 national training workshops have been conducted exclusively by local national staff, without the direct involvement of regional advisors;
  - (b) Promoting the role of academia in mainstreaming biosafety issues:
    - The BCH2 project directly encourages and facilitates the adoption of BCH training materials and topics into national academic curricula, in particular at the tertiary level. This will ensure that the knowledge created through the project will remain permanently in the individual countries and regions as part of academic programmes, enabling national capacity in these topics to be sustained after the lifetime of the project;
    - Under the project, one-day training measures were carried out for 11 countries, specifically designed for their academic sectors to deliver specific training on BCH and to facilitate use of the training materials in their regular curricula. During the

regional workshops, a catalogue of biosafety-related university courses in participating countries was developed;<sup>4</sup>

- (c) Supporting the establishment of information-sharing roles and their internalization in the job descriptions of participating country representatives:
  - Integrating BCH data entry and data validation functions as routine tasks in the work of the civil servants concerned, thereby ensuring that those exercises become a standing obligation of the government. For BCH country obligations to be fully incorporated into government responsibilities, however, it is essential that national biosafety frameworks are fully implemented. Operationalizing the frameworks will establish the legal mandate and administrative wherewithal for BCH-related tasks to be executed consistently in the long term;
  - The obligations to share information on the BCH (article 20 of the CPB) and the critical role played by the BCH focal points (decision COP-MOP1 BS-I/3) and national authorized users in entering national data into the BCH are highlighted at all stages of the training activities. A direct outcome of this approach was the nomination of 64 national authorized users.

# 5. Indicators for measuring the BCH2 project effectiveness

5.1. The information made available on the BCH central portal serves as a useful indicator for the effectiveness of the BCH2 project. The total number of published records in participating countries increased by 61 per cent, compared to the 39 per cent of such records in eligible non-participating countries. In addition, the percentage increase in updated records in participating countries measured 73 per cent, as against the 27 per cent increase in eligible non-participating countries.



5.2. Requirements pursuant to Article 20 paragraph 3<sup>5</sup> are all obligatory, this means is that if a party has no information unless it indicates so, it is considered non-compliant.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>A consolidated report on the BCH2 regional workshops for national focal points may be found athttps://anubis.unep.org/documents/doc\_viewatt.php?doc\_id= 35314&sub\_id=1041.

- 5.3. The main category of records published and updated on the BCH Central Portal by BCH2 participating countries are the so-called basic records, i.e. National Contacts: CPB and BCH-NFPs, Competent National Authorities, and Art.17 National Contact for emergency measures. The second categories of records published are National Records relevant for the implementation of the Protocol, i.e. Laws, Regulations, decisions when they are available. After capacity building activities, we noted that several countries uploaded Decisions and Risk Assessments such as India, Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam, Costa Rica, Honduras and Burkina Faso.
- 5.4. The indicators for measuring the BCH2 effectiveness are:
- i) the increase in the total number of records (61% for participating countries versus 39% for non-participating countries) and;
- ii) the number of updated records (73% versus 27%).
- 5.5. For BCH-NFPs, there are not so significant turn-overs, neither for RAs; and most of times, turn-overs at the country level have been either beneficial for the national BCH or have ensured continuity with previous National BCH team. Since 2005 in Latin-American and the Caribbean regions no significant turnovers of BCH NFPs have occurred within BCH2 project participating countries while in Africa and Asia it is estimated to be less than 25%. As explained before, in some cases it has resulted more beneficial or having continuity because new national BCH NFPs improve nBCH status (Benin) or keep good relations with previous ones (Senegal, Togo).
- 5.6. Nevertheless, due to unavoidable circumstances of potential BCH NFPs turnover, the BCH2 project is implementing several strategies to overcome these changes and promote sustainability of national BCH and BCH-NFPs role:
  - a) Disseminating BCHknowledge and training Materials amongst national stakeholders ensures BCH networking beyond the duration of the project (for example, with academic sector and new stakeholders) have benefited from the wide range of training materials.
  - b) Emphasize BCH-NFP role in implementing the Protocol and integration of its role in its official job description.
  - c) In order to ensure a stand-alone BCH Training for all, and in addition to the existent training manuals available at the BCH Central Portal, a new virtual training course is in preparation. The main objective of these webinar series is to deliver constantly to parties a basic tool kit explaining the roles and responsibilities of the BCH NFP
  - d) Finally, during regional and global BCH Training workshops, countries are associated to our initiatives and provide their feed-back on innovative strategies to ensure sustainability; during the COP/MOP 6 a session is planned to receive additional feedback from participant and non-participant countries. In addition, we have introduced the BCH on BCH forum in collaboration with the SCBD as a platform to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Article 20, Para.3:- Without prejudice to the protection of confidential information, each Party shall make available to the Biosafety Clearing-House any information required to be made available to the Biosafety Clearing-House under this Protocol, and:

<sup>(</sup>a)Any existing laws, regulations and guidelines for implementation of the Protocol, as well as information required by the Parties for the advance informed agreement procedure;

<sup>(</sup>b) Any bilateral, regional and multilateral agreements and arrangements;

<sup>(</sup>c) Summaries of its risk assessments or environmental reviews of living modified organisms generated by its regulatory process, and carried out in accordance with Article 15, including, where appropriate, relevant information regarding products thereof, namely, processed materials that are of living modified organism origin, containing detectable novel combinations of replicable genetic material obtained through the use of modern biotechnology;

<sup>(</sup>d) Its final decisions regarding the importation or release of living modified organisms; and (e)Reports submitted by it pursuant to Article 33, including those on implementation of the advance informed agreement procedure.

nurture and continuously create a forum for BCH NFPs as part of sustaining the learning process.

5.7. All planned regional workshops and 90 per cent of the planned national workshops have been conducted by the project team. Feedback from the training participants was positive. The average increase in participants' knowledge directly attributable to their training under the project was estimated at 33 per cent. The team and the network of regional advisors are very well established with an estimated turnover of RAs of less than 10%. In the event of RAs gaps at sub-regional level, the regional specialist act as backup and on site trainer of new regional advisors.

# 6. Collaboration with partners

6.1. The BCH team has been engaging with partners to ensure that the project builds upon the work already being carried out by others and is able to harness the lessons learned and practices developed in previous work.

#### Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

- 6.2. The BCH2 project is implemented by UNEP in close cooperation with the CBD Secretariat acting as a technical partner. Management and technical personnel from both the CBD Secretariat and the project collaborate in planning and executing project activities. Through regional and global networks the Secretariat provides direct technical assistance to the regional advisors and to parties in the use of the BCH, along with the Hermes and Ajax tools<sup>6</sup>. The SCBD in collaboration with the UNEP project team backstops on a on a continuous basis use of the developed tools via electronic media and forums. The Secretariat also attends global and regional workshops hosted by the project for the specific purpose of providing training on the BCH, Hermes and Ajax, focusing in particular on new developments under the CPB, updated BCH functionality and revised common formats for national information.
- 6.3. The CBD Secretariat receives project support at COP-MOP side events in the form of assistance from regional advisors in conducting BCH training workshops. It also publishes the training materials developed by the project on the BCH central portal help system, thus promoting its global dissemination and providing a permanent home for these materials.

#### **Project Steering Committee**

6.4. The overall project performance of BCH2 is under the supervision of a Project Steering Committee. It comprises representatives of the UNEP Division of Environmental Policy Implementation (DEPI) (as the chair), UNEP-Division of Environmental Law and Conventions (DELC), the CBD Secretariat, the United Nations University, the Third World Network and the Global Industry Coalition. The Committee is responsible for guiding the overall implementation of the project and serves as the primary decision-making body to which the Project Manager will report.

#### Support for Capacity Building for BCH

6.5. Countries have offered to contribute to the development and execution of aspects of the training for the BCH regional workshops. The Government of the Republic of Korea contributed

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Hermes is a completed online Content Management System which provides the building blocks of a national BCH and BCH AJAX Plug-in is a client side application, developed by the BCH Team, that can be easily integrated with any existing website to provide dynamic display of information from the BCH.

towards the organization and sponsorship of non-participating countries to the subregional workshop for the Asia-Pacific region and Central and Eastern Europe. The African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE) of the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development sponsored the attendance of three non-participating countries at the anglophone Africa workshop. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran similarly offered to host one subregional workshop.

# 7. Conclusions

- 7.1. To date, small-scale founding agreements have been signed with 49 countries,<sup>7</sup> and 59 of the 139 eligible countries have participated in project activities. Thanks to support from national and international agencies, participation in project activities has been extended to 10 more countries.<sup>8</sup>
- 7.2. In all, 90 national training workshops have been conducted by regional advisors in 46 participating countries for 916 national institutions. As a direct result of project intervention, the average increase in participants' knowledge has been estimated at 33 per cent.
- 7.3. The project design and much of the investment have been focused on mobilizing central resources in the form of training modules, on making electronic forums publicly available and on providing on-site assistance from the regional advisors. Significant advances have been made in strengthening national capacity to fulfil BCH obligations under the Cartagena Protocol.
- 7.4. The regional advisors' network has proved to be a powerful tool in the project's task of tackling national and regional BCH issues; while performing on-site assistance and contributing to the design and dissemination of training materials, it has also played a cardinal role in promoting regional and subregional collaboration, networking and the exchange of experience for BCH management.
- 7.5. BCH data entry and data validation functions still need to be officially incorporated in the job description of the relevant civil servants. For BCH country obligations to be fully assimilated into government responsibilities, it is essential that national biosafety frameworks are fully implemented. Operationalizing the frameworks will establish the legal mandate and administrative wherewithal for BCH-related tasks to be executed consistently in the long term.
- 7.6. Implementation of CPB and related BCH obligations has gained much from the BCH2 project but still relies on the continuous provision of support to developing country parties, in particular the least developed and small island developing States among them, and to parties with economies in transition, including through existing global, regional, subregional and national institutions and organizations and, as appropriate, through facilitating private sector involvement (Article22 of the Protocol). Limitations observed thus far in participation in the BCH are often the consequence of national and regional constraints beyond the scope and control of the project.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, India, Jordan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Malaysia, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Moldova, Senegal, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint. Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo, Tonga, Tunisia, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam and Yemen.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>China, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kenya, Mozambique, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Uganda.