



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

Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS, CONVENTIONS AND INITIATIVES

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its fifth meeting, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (COP-MOP), in its decision BS-V/16, adopted the Strategic Plan of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety covering the period 2011 to 2020. Under focal area 5 of the Strategic Plan, the Parties adopted a strategic objective on outreach and cooperation with an expected impact to increase support from and collaboration with relevant organizations, conventions and initiatives for the implementation of the Protocol. In this strategic objective, there is an operational objective to enhance international cooperation and collaboration in biosafety with outcomes to establish official relationships with secretariats of other conventions and organizations and to have the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity as an observer to the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Committees on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and Technical Barriers to Trade.

2. The present note provides an overview of the actions taken by the Executive Secretary within the context of the Strategic Plan and in response to decision BS-V/6 on cooperation. Further, the overview also provides information on cooperative actions undertaken between the Secretariat and other organizations, conventions and initiatives with a view to creating synergy in biosafety-related programmes in general, and ensuring the effective implementation of the Protocol in particular.

3. Additional information on the collaborative activities with regards to specific areas of the Strategic Plan of the Protocol is reported, where relevant, in the respective pre-sessional documents that are made available for the sixth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

* UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/1.

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II. OVERVIEW OF ONGOING COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES

A. *Green Customs Initiative*

4. In the context of operational objectives 2.3 and 5.2 of the Strategic Plan, the Secretariat continued as a partner in the Green Customs Initiative (GCI) during the inter-sessional period. The objective of the GCI is to enhance the capacity of customs and other relevant enforcement personnel to monitor and facilitate the legal trade and to detect and prevent illegal trade in those environmentally-sensitive goods or substances covered by the partner organizations.

5. The Secretariat's main GCI-related work during the inter-sessional period was the organization of two training of trainers' workshops on the documentation and identification of living modified organisms (LMOs) – one for Central and Eastern Europe and one for Asia. The reports of the workshops have been made available as information documents for this meeting (documents UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/INF/8 and UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/INF/19, respectively). Representatives from some of the GCI partners gave presentations during these workshops. A component on handling, transport, packaging and identification was also included in the Pacific Sub-regional Workshop on Capacity-building for the Effective Implementation of the Biosafety Protocol (see document UNEP/CBD/BS/CB-PAC/1/2).

6. During the inter-sessional period, the Green Customs Initiative organized a number of national and sub-regional Green Customs workshops in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity nominated resource persons to give presentations on the Protocol during these workshops.

7. The Secretariat also attended the seventh meeting of the partners in the Initiative which was held from 8 to 9 February 2011 at INTERPOL in Lyon, France. During the meeting, the partners reviewed activities from 2010 under the Initiative and developed a work plan for 2010. The Secretariat of the Convention participated via video conference in the eighth meeting of the partners in January 2012.

8. The Secretariat's continued participation in the Initiative, however, will depend on availability of resources since each partner organization needs to bring on board its own resources. The Parties to the Protocol may wish to consider allocating some resources in the budget of the upcoming biennium to sustain the work of this Initiative.

B. *Cooperation with the World Trade Organization*

9. The Secretariat continued to liaise and cooperate with WTO. The Executive Secretary renewed his request for observer status in relevant committees of WTO and continued to follow discussions and negotiations in these committees, including by liaising with staff of the WTO secretariat. Briefings on pertinent decisions of the Conference of the Parties and the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol were provided to the Committee on Trade and Environment. The Secretariat holds observer status in the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE) in regular session and is invited, on a regular basis, to the formal meetings of the CTE in special (negotiating) session.

C. *Cooperation in information-sharing*

10. Within the context of the memorandum of understanding signed in 2004 between the Secretariat and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and with the aim to avoid duplication of efforts and improve the usefulness of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) as a global mechanism for information-sharing on biosafety, both organizations have stated their intention to fully

cooperate in achieving this goal. However, some technical challenges have delayed a detailed common action plan.

11. Two databases on LMO detection methods, namely the 'EU Reference Laboratory for GM Food and Feed' (EURL-GMFF) and the 'CropLife International Detection Methods Database', have been made interoperable with the BCH. References to specific detection methods, when available, are provided as links on the LMO information pages. Some progress has been made toward the implementation of interoperability with the 'Biotradestatus' database (managed by the Biotechnology Industry Organization - BIO) for the regulatory and market status of certain agricultural biotechnology products¹.

12. With regard to capacity-building, the Secretariat has worked closely with the UNEP/GEF Project for Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the BCH by providing technical assistance on the development of national nodes as well as training activities directed to regional advisors and BCH national focal points, involving regional and subregional workshops.

D. Cooperation with the International Plant Protection Convention

15. During the inter-sessional period, the Secretariat of the Convention provided feedback on a number of draft standards and draft specifications being developed under the auspices of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and participated in the Open-ended Workshop on the International Movement of Grain organized by the North American Plant Protection Organization and the IPPC in Vancouver, Canada in December 2011.

16. The Secretariat of the Convention also continued to share information with the International Advisory Group on Pest Risk Analysis (IAGPRA), which is coordinated by the Secretariat of the IPPC.

17. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity provided reports on relevant activities to the sixth and seventh meetings of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures.

18. Furthermore, in decision BS-V/9 adopted by the Parties at their fifth meeting, the International Plant Protection Convention was invited to collaborate with the Secretariat of the Convention in the development of an explanatory document on the terminology of the Protocol in relation to the glossary of phytosanitary terms adopted by the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures. The Executive Secretary sent a letter to the Secretary of the International Plant Protection Convention conveying this invitation.

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

19. At its second meeting, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary, in decision BS-II/6, to intensify cooperation with the Aarhus Convention secretariat in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on matters of public awareness and participation. At their fifth meeting, in decision BS-V/13, Parties adopted the programme of work on public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms. In the same decision, Parties underlined the importance of ensuring coherence among the programme of work and relevant activities of the Aarhus Convention and other

¹ The EU Reference Laboratory for GM Food and Feed (EURL-GMFF) and the CropLife International Detection Methods databases, are both reachable through links to BCH records of LMOs and are available respectively at <http://gmo-crl.jrc.ec.europa.eu/default.htm> (EURL-GMFF) and <http://www.detection-methods.com/> (CropLife). Full interoperability with the CropLife database is still to be achieved. The Biotradestatus website, a database for the regulatory and market status of certain agricultural biotechnology products, is maintained by the Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO) at <http://www.biotradestatus.com/>

relevant conventions and organisations to maximize opportunities for cooperation in the promotion of public awareness, education and participation concerning living modified organisms.

20. Pursuant to the above decisions, the Secretariat has collaborated with the Aarhus Convention secretariat. Prior to the fifth meeting of the Parties, the two secretariats organized a second joint CBD-Aarhus Convention workshop on public awareness, access to information and participation regarding living modified organisms/genetically modified organisms, in Nagoya, Japan, from 8 to 9 October 2010.² More than 50 participants attended the workshop. The participants shared knowledge, experiences and lessons learned regarding public awareness, access to information and public participation and developed recommendations on the programme of work on public awareness, education and participation concerning LMOs.

21. During the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention held in July 2011, the Secretariat and the Aarhus Convention Secretariat co-organized a side event to discuss practical ways to maximize synergies in the implementation of Article 23 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (including the programme of work on public awareness, education and participation), and the Aarhus Convention's provisions on genetically modified organisms. More than 40 participants attended.

22. In May 2012, the Secretariat and the Aarhus Convention co-organized an online forum on public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs through the Biosafety Clearing-House. Two discussion groups were held on the following topics: 1) The meaning, scope and importance of public access to biosafety information; and 2) Facilitating public access to biosafety information. The discussion groups included 9 partner organizations, in particular the Aarhus Convention, which took the lead in encouraging stakeholders to participate. The two discussion groups had a total of 98 participants, including representatives of Parties to the Protocol, non-Parties, relevant organizations, United Nations agencies, academia and media. A total of 155 messages were posted: 56 from Discussion Group 1 and 99 from Discussion Group 2.

23. Continued collaboration between the two treaties, including possibilities of organizing joint workshops and/or side events will depend on availability of resources. The meeting of the Parties to the Protocol may wish to invite Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to consider allocating resources in the budget of the upcoming biennium to sustain the collaborative work.

III. ELEMENTS OF A DRAFT DECISION

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

(a) Whether there are aspects of cooperation with other organizations, conventions and initiatives which are not being adequately addressed to meet the strategic objective of the Strategic Plan regarding outreach and cooperation, and may wish to specify activities to address those aspects;

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

² The first joint workshop on good practices regarding access to information, public participation and access to justice regarding genetically modified organisms, was held 19 to 20 May 2008 in Cologne, Germany, shortly after the fourth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (see the workshop report at: <http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/meetings/documents.shtml?eventid=3401>).