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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 9 of the provisional agenda*

STATUS OF CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The fifth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol adopted terms of reference for the comprehensive review of the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the effective Implementation of the Protocol. The terms of reference outlined, *inter alia*, the scope and the process leading up to the review of the Action Plan at the present meeting (decision BS-V/3). Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations were invited to submit relevant information that might facilitate the comprehensive review of the Action Plan as well as views and suggestions on its possible revision. The Executive Secretary was also requested to commission an independent evaluation of the Action Plan and to prepare a working document to facilitate the comprehensive review of the Action Plan, taking into account the above submissions by Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations, the information provided in the second national reports, and the findings of the independent evaluation. Furthermore, the Executive Secretary was requested to organize an online forum to identify strategic approaches to capacity-building and develop a capacity assessment framework and a framework for monitoring and evaluation, and submit the outcomes to the sixth meeting of the Parties.

2. With regard to the Coordination Mechanism, the fourth meeting of the Parties, in paragraph 15 of decision BS-IV/3, requested the Executive Secretary to continue undertaking measures to improve the implementation of the mechanism and provide a report to the sixth meeting of the Parties.

3. The present document provides, in section II, a synthesis report on the status of capacity-building under the Protocol, including progress made on the implementation of the Action Plan. Section III presents an analysis of strategic approaches that could help to improve the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of biosafety capacity-building initiatives. Section IV provides a short report on the

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implementation of the Coordination Mechanism and outlines measures to streamline and improve its implementation. The last section provides elements of a possible decision on capacity-building.

4. The meeting of the Parties is invited to take into account the information provided in the present document in its consideration of the comprehensive review and possible revision of the updated Action Plan and measures for improving the Coordination Mechanism. It may also wish to take into account the information in providing further guidance on measures to improve capacity-building efforts in line with the Strategic Plan for the Protocol for the period 2011-2020. The meeting of the Parties may also wish to consider document UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/7/Add.1 prepared by the Executive Secretary to facilitate the comprehensive review and possible revision of the Action Plan. The document includes a draft Framework and Action Plan for Capacity-Building for the Effective Implementation of the Protocol proposed to replace the current updated Action Plan.

II. REPORT ON THE STATUS OF CAPACITY-BUILDING UNDER THE PROTOCOL INCLUDING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN

5. Pursuant to the decisions referred to in paragraphs 2 and 3 above, this section presents a synthesis report on the status of capacity-building under the Protocol, including progress with the implementation of the Action Plan, based on the information provided by Parties in their second national reports, the reports submitted to the Secretariat and the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) by Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations on their capacity-building activities and on the findings of the independent evaluation of the Action Plan. A more detailed account on the implementation of the Action Plan is provided in the report of the independent evaluation made available in information document UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/INF/2.

A. Report on the status of capacity-building based on information in the second national reports

6. In their second national reports, 119 Parties (83% of the respondents to Question 143 of the reporting format) reported that, during the current reporting period, they have undertaken activities for the development and/or strengthening of human resources and institutional capacities in biosafety. This includes 84% of the Parties in Africa, 80% in Asia and the Pacific, 79% in CEE, 90% in GRULAC, 84% in WEOG, 79% from least developed countries (LDCs) and 73% from small island developing States (SIDS).

7. A number of Parties reported having undertaken capacity-building activities with respect to following elements of the Action Plan: human resources capacity development and training (12% of the Parties), information exchange and data management including participation in the BCH (12%); public awareness, participation and education in biosafety (12%), institutional capacity-building (11%), risk assessment and other scientific and technical expertise (9%); identification of living modified organisms (LMOs), including their detection (8%); scientific, technical and institutional collaboration at subregional, regional and international levels (7%) and risk management (6%). However, few Parties reported having undertaken activities in relation to the following elements: technology transfer (2%), handling of confidential information (2%), measures to address unintentional and/or illegal transboundary movements of LMOs (3%), taking into account risks to human health (4%), implementation of the documentation requirements under Article 18.2 of the Protocol (4%), socio-economic considerations (4%), and scientific biosafety research relating to LMOs (5%).

8. In response to Question 56 of the reporting format, 114 Parties reported a need for further capacity-building in all the above elements. In addition, 61 Parties (43% of the respondents to the question) indicated that they need financial and technical assistance and capacity-building with respect to

living modified organisms intended for direct use as food or feed or processing, in accordance with paragraph 9 of Article 11 of the Protocol.¹

9. Eighty-nine Parties (62% of the respondents to Question 135) reported that they have received external support or benefited from collaborative activities with other Parties in the development and/or strengthening of their human resources and institutional capacities in biosafety. This was the case for 78% of the respondents in Africa, 63% in Asia and the Pacific, 37% in CEE, 95% in GRULAC, 11% in WEOG, 74% in LDCs and 82% in SIDS. These responses suggest that many developing country Parties, especially LDCs and SIDS, have relied on external support to build their capacities in biosafety. It was reported that most that support is through multilateral channels (39%), largely through the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The rest is through bilateral (37%) and regional channels (23%).

10. Forty-one Parties (29% of the respondents) reported that they have provided support to other Parties in the development and/or strengthening of human resources and institutional capacities in biosafety. This includes: 14% of the respondents in Africa, 26% in Asia and the Pacific, 21% in CEE, 52% in GRULAC, 53% in WEOG, 8% among LDCs and 14% among SIDS. These responses suggest that there is ongoing South-South cooperation in the field of biosafety although to a limited extent.

11. Sixty-eight Parties (48% of the respondents) reported that they carried out a capacity-building needs assessment during the last reporting period, including 51% of the respondents in Africa, 43% in Asia and the Pacific, 63% in CEE, 62% in GRULAC, 16% in WEOG, and 38% among LDCs and 41% among SIDS. However, only 39 Parties (27% of the respondents) reported that they have developed a capacity-building strategy or action plan. This includes: 31% of the respondents in Africa, 29% in Asia and the Pacific, 32% in CEE, 29% in GRULAC, 11% in WEOG, 28% in LDCs and 27% of the respondents from SIDS. These responses suggest that many countries have not yet adopted a systematic and coherent approach to capacity-building for the implementation of the Protocol.

12. With regards to existing capacities, a number of Parties reported that they have developed their national biosafety frameworks (NBFs) and some are in the process of implementing them with support from the GEF. At least 63 Parties (45% of the respondents to Question 84) also reported that they have acquired the necessary domestic capacity to conduct risk assessment, 95 Parties (67%) have established a mechanism for conducting risk assessments and 70 Parties (50%) have established guidelines for doing so. Furthermore, 35 Parties (24% of the respondents to Question 34) reported that they have the capacity to detect and identify LMOs and an additional 52% stated that such capacity exists to some extent. Some reported that they have established LMO detection laboratories and others have acquired quick test kits.

13. The above analysis indicates that many Parties are yet to put in place coherent national strategies or action plans for capacity-building in biosafety. In a number of Parties, capacity-building activities seem to be implemented in an ad hoc and fragmented manner, mostly as isolated one-off activities/events carried out by different players. Furthermore, capacity-building initiatives do not seem to be based on systematic stocktaking and needs assessments. It is also apparent that major capacity gaps still remain, particularly in the following areas: unintentional and/or illegal transboundary movements of LMOs, implementing the documentation requirements under Article 18.2 of the Protocol, handling of confidential information, undertaking scientific biosafety research relating to LMOs, and for taking into account socio-economic considerations and risks to human health in decision-making regarding LMOs.

14. The meeting of the Parties may wish to take note of the current status and trends in capacity-building as summarized above and provide guidance on measures to address the identified gaps

¹ According to the information available in the BCH, as of the date this report was prepared, 27 Parties had submitted to the BCH information about their Capacity-Building Needs and Priorities (<http://bch.cbd.int/database/results/?searchid=520609>)

and challenges and to enhance national and global efforts towards building adequate capacity for implementation of the Protocol as envisioned in the Strategic Plan for the Protocol.

B. Report on the Status of Implementation of the Action Plan

15. Pursuant to paragraph 6 of decision BS-III/3, paragraph 4 of decision BS-IV/3 and paragraph 2 of decision BS-V/3, the Executive Secretary issued a notification in February 2011 inviting Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to submit reports on their activities and the progress made towards implementing the Action Plan, as well as relevant information that might facilitate the comprehensive review of the updated Action Plan. In response, submissions were received from: Bolivia, the European Union and its member states (Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden), and Malaysia. A compilation of all the submissions made is available as an information document (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/INF/4).

16. In addition, the following Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations submitted updates on their capacity-building activities during the seventh and eighth coordination meetings: Austria, Cambodia, Czech Republic, Italy, Liberia, the Netherlands and the Republic of Moldova, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Regional Agricultural and Environment Initiatives Network (RAEIN)-Africa. The updates were compiled and made available at the two meetings in information documents UNEP/CBD/BS/CM-CB/7/INF/1 and UNEP/CBD/BS/CM-CB/8/INF/1.²

17. Most of the submissions reported on the progress made under previous and ongoing biosafety capacity-building activities. Few new biosafety projects/initiatives and support programmes are reported to have been implemented since the last meeting of the Parties.

18. A review of the submissions received reveals that the momentum for capacity-building under the Protocol has slowed down over the last few years. While information provided in the second national reports shows that many Parties, especially LDCs and SIDS, still lack the requisite capacity to effectively implement the Protocol, the level of capacity-building support is declining at a very fast rate. The meeting of the Parties may wish to consider measures to improve the mobilization of resources for capacity-building.

19. The independent evaluation of the Action Plan, among other things, assessed the progress made towards its implementation. The report noted that in general progress has been made towards achieving the objective of the Action Plan. A number of capacity-building initiatives contributing to the different elements of the Action Plan have been implemented at national, regional and international levels with support from various donor agencies, the GEF and the United Nations agencies. However, as noted in paragraphs 8 and 9 above, few projects/activities have contributed to capacity-building in the following elements of the Action Plan: handling of confidential information, technology transfer, implementation of documentation requirements and socio-economic considerations.

20. With regard to institutional capacity, it is evident from the second national reports that some progress has been made in terms of drafting national biosafety policy, legal and administrative frameworks. As of 30 May 2012, at least 118 countries had prepared draft NBFs with support from the

² The documents can be accessed from websites of the seventh coordination meeting held 4-6 April 2011 in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova (<http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/meetings/documents.shtml?eventid=4730>) and the eighth coordination meeting held 12-14 March 2012 in Prague, Czech Republic (<http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/meetings/documents.shtml?eventid=4978>).

GEF.³ However, in a significant number of Parties relevant biosafety laws have not yet been enacted. Many Parties have also established administrative systems for decision-making regarding LMOs although they are not fully functional. In general, while there is still a need for further development of regulatory and administrative systems in some countries, these are no longer the top pressing priorities as they were when the Action Plan was adopted. Currently, the most critical institutional capacity need in many countries is developing the necessary infrastructure and technical capacity.

21. With regard to human resource development, many training activities and workshops have been implemented as reflected in the BCH records. However as noted in various evaluation reports, including the assessment report on biotechnology and biosafety capacity-development activities published by the United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU-IAS)⁴ in 2008 and the evaluation of GEF-funded biosafety projects, many workshops have largely been at an awareness-raising or introductory level.

22. With regard to data management and the exchange of information, the Biosafety Clearing-House has been an effective tool for information exchange and has made significant contribution to facilitating biosafety capacity-building efforts. Many capacity-building initiatives have also included components which have helped to advance efforts towards increasing public awareness, education, and participation concerning LMOs. As noted in the previous section, some progress has also been made in building capacities for risk assessment and risk management. Some capacity-building initiatives have also been undertaken in key scientific and technical areas, including training in LMO detection and establishment of laboratories for detection and analysis of LMOs.

23. The report of the independent evaluation of the Action Plan noted that lack of funding is biggest challenge affecting the implementation of the Action Plan. Although a number of biosafety capacity-building activities received funding support from various sources in the early years following the adoption of the Protocol, there has been a significant decrease in the last few years. Currently, there are very few ongoing bilateral biosafety projects. Most Parties are relying on the GEF as the only source of funding for biosafety capacity-building projects. This challenge has been further compounded by the apparent decline in the amount of GEF resources allocated to biosafety projects following the introduction of the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) in 2005, which was replaced by the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) in 2010.

24. Under the STAR, which is intended to ensure that activities are country driven and based on national priorities, the funding for biosafety is currently lumped in with the funds available for all other issues under the biodiversity focal area. As such, countries are requested to prioritize among the various biodiversity issues (including biosafety) and utilize their indicative country allocations accordingly. Unfortunately, due to the tight country allocations and the many competing priorities within the biodiversity focal area, there seems to a general reluctance by many countries to use part of their allocation for biosafety activities which are more preventative, precautionary and strategic in nature, compared to issues such as protected areas that can yield immediate visible results. Consequently, GEF funding for biosafety declined significantly since the end of the third GEF replenishment period in 2006.

25. The meeting of the Parties may wish to take note of the current status and trends in capacity-building as summarized above and provide guidance on measures to address the identified gaps and challenges as well as strategies to enhance efforts towards building adequate capacity for

³ The list of countries that have developed draft NBFs is available at: <http://www.unep.org/biosafety/>

⁴ UNU-IAS (2008). Internationally Funding Training in Biosafety and Biotechnology: Is it Bridging the Genetic Divide? (page 105): http://www.ias.unu.edu/resource_centre/Internationally%20Funded%20Training%20in%20Biotechnology%20and%20Biosafety_Is%20it%20Bridging%20the%20Biotech%20Divide.pdf.

implementation of the Protocol at national, regional and global levels as envisioned in the Strategic Plan for the Protocol.

III. STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO IMPROVING BIOSAFETY CAPACITY-BUILDING INITIATIVES

26. In accordance with paragraph 19 of decision BS-V/3, the Executive Secretary organized, through the BCH, an “Online Forum on Strategic Approaches to Capacity-building for Biosafety and the Comprehensive Review of the Capacity-Building Action Plan” from 20 February to 4 May 2012.⁵ A notification was sent out on 9 February 2012 inviting all National Focal Points and relevant organizations to take part in the Forum and a reminder was sent out on 29 February. However, the level of participation in the forum during that period was very low. In order to give Governments and relevant organizations further opportunity to express their views and suggestions, particularly on strategic approaches to improve the design, delivery and impact of capacity-building initiatives, the Forum was re-opened in July for a period of 2 weeks. However there was no improvement in the level of participation.

27. In the absence of adequate submissions through the online forum, the Executive Secretary has prepared the following analysis of strategic approaches to capacity-building in biosafety based on a review of existing reports, including the report on the independent evaluation of the Action Plan (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/INF/2), the expert review of the effectiveness of various approaches to biosafety capacity-building produced by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for the fifth meeting of the Parties (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/5/INF/9), the global assessment of biotechnology and biosafety capacity development activities published by the UNU-IAS in 2008; and the evaluation of GEF support for biosafety published in 2006.⁶

28. The reports indicate that Governments and relevant organizations have adopted various approaches to capacity-building, ranging from project-based to programmatic approaches; short-term to long-term approaches; national-based to regional and global umbrella project approaches; bottom-up to top-down approaches; holistic to modular/single-task approaches; integrated to stand-alone interventions; standardized to tailored approaches; and results-based to process-based approaches. Furthermore, a wide range of capacity-building methods are being used, including: seminars and workshops, formal education leading to academic qualifications (degrees or diplomas), staff exchanges and study visits, technical assistance (including expert advice or supply of technical equipment), on-the-job training (coaching, mentoring, job rotations, etc); fellowships and joint research; peer-to-peer learning networks, and provision of access to information repositories (databases, virtual libraries and websites, etc).

29. The reports reviewed highlight a number of major weaknesses in the current approaches to biosafety capacity-building. For example, many Parties and other Governments *lack coherent national strategies or action plans for capacity-building in biosafety* resulting in a situation whereby capacity-building activities are initiated and implemented in an ad hoc and fragmented manner. In their second national reports, only 39 Parties (27% of the respondents) indicated that they have developed a capacity-building strategy or action plan. The meeting of the Parties may wish to urge Parties to develop national strategies identifying what capacities to be built, for whom, on what topics, and to what end? A clear set of strategic national objectives, mutually agreed among beneficiaries and providers, would help to effectively target resources to critical needs, improve synergies and ensure that capacity-building interventions focus on the strategic areas and targets identified Parties, taking into account the global Strategic Plan for the Protocol.

⁵ Information regarding the Forum, including the discussion groups can be accessed at:
http://bch.cbd.int/onlineconferences/portal_art22/cbforum2012.shtml.

⁶ The evaluation report of GEF support for biosafety (2006) can be accessed at:
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/7034/364060v20Biosafety1Full1Report01PUBLIC1.pdf?sequence=1>

30. Many biosafety *capacity-building initiatives also seem to lack rigorous appraisal at the design stage* and many are not based on systematic and participatory stocktaking and needs assessments. As indicated in the second national reports, only 68 Parties (48% of the respondents) carried out a capacity-building needs assessment during the last reporting period. The UNU-IAS report noted that most needs assessments have been done in an ad hoc and unfocused manner. They have been compiled through a simple listing process, often involving questionnaires with multiple-choices of possible needs or leading questions often resulting in long lists of needs that lack prioritization. In order to make capacity-building initiatives more strategic, demand-driven and effective, the meeting of the Parties may wish to adopt measures to encourage and assist Parties to undertake systematic and participatory needs assessments.

31. There is a *significant emphasis on short-term* seminars and workshops as the main delivery mechanisms for human resource development and many of the trainings have been delivered in an ad hoc manner as one-off events, with limited synergies among them and no effective follow-up. Moreover, many of them have largely been at a general awareness-raising or introductory level. As noted in UNEP's expert review and by one of the participants in the online forum, short-term training workshops were useful a few years ago when biosafety was a new subject to most people, including government officials. However, time for general introductory biosafety courses and workshops has passed. In this regard, the meeting of the Parties also to urge Parties and relevant organization, as appropriate, to:

(a) Focus on more in-depth and sustainable training linked to areas of professional responsibilities and on long-term education of people in key biosafety fields (risk assessment, risk management, LMO detection, and others) through formal courses at graduate and post-graduate levels in order to develop a cadre of biosafety experts in various fields;

(b) Adopt a more systematic approach to training in biosafety involving assessment of training needs, setting of clear training objectives, designing and implementing training programmes that use a wide of range of training methods and tools (including presentations, interactive discussions, exercises, case-studies, hands-on laboratory exercises and field visits), evaluation of the training activities and ensuring effective follow-up;

(c) Adopt customized approaches to biosafety training. While standardized training packages may be appropriate in some instances, in general a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to training has limitations because of the varying needs and circumstances among countries that often require tailor-made solutions.

(d) Place emphasis on the "training-of-trainers" approach in order to create a "snowball effect" and foster a continuous process of knowledge and skills building at various levels. If this approach is to be effective it is critical to ensure that the trained trainers have the necessary institutional support, structures, facilities and resources to be able train others;

(e) Explore the possibility of maximizing the use of information communication technologies to expand opportunities for distance-learning, including use interactive e-learning modules online and on CD-ROM. As noted in the independent evaluation of the Action Plan provision of e-learning modules would help Parties to undertake capacity-development activities on their own. It would also increase the number of people benefiting from the training and in a cost effective manner;

(f) Consider institutionalizing the short-term trainings (including seminars, workshops and short-term courses) whereby designated national or regional institutions, including universities or research institutes, would take the lead in delivering those trainings on a regular basis, instead of various individual government departments and organizations themselves offering the seminars and workshops

on an ad hoc, one-off basis. This would help to improve the quality, effectiveness, impact, complementarity and sustainability of those trainings;

(g) Diversify approaches to human resources development beyond seminars and workshops to include formal education and training programmes, learning by doing (including on-the-job coaching and mentorship, staff exchanges, fellowships, and study visits), peer-to-peer learning through professional networking, and self-instruction (e.g. through online courses).

32. *The selection of recipients of training and other capacity-building activities is also an issue that needs due consideration.* Some reports have indicated that often the same individuals (usually government officials) are selected to attend the training activities organized under various capacity-building initiatives. In some countries, this has resulted in a situation where only few people have the necessary expertise and are involved in all sorts of capacity-building activities creating potential risks in the event of staff turnover. It may be advisable for Parties to broaden the pool of people trained at the national level that can initiate and sustain biosafety activities. Besides policy-makers, regulators and enforcement officials, other key players outside the Government, including research scientists, academics and participants from civil society should be considered for trainings in biosafety.

33. *Many biosafety capacity-building initiatives have adopted a short-term to medium-term approach (ranging from 1 to 3 years).* However as noted by UNEP's expert review, capacity development is a long-term process that may last several years, especially in countries low capacity baselines. What has been accomplished to date represents only an initial step in the long-term process of building sustainable capacities to make the national biosafety frameworks fully functional. The meeting of Parties may wish to encourage Parties to take a long-term perspective to capacity-building within the context of the national capacity-building strategies and the Strategic Plan for the Protocol. Parties may also be encouraged to adopt a phased multi-year approach to capacity-building.

34. As noted in the independent evaluation of the Action Plan and in the evaluation of GEF support, a number of *biosafety projects lack proactive measures to ensure sustainability of the project results* once the project funding ends. The meeting of the Parties may wish to invite Parties to put in place measures that would encourage capacity retention and facilitate access to online databases, scientific journals, online training modules and access to international experts through ongoing collaboration, networking and sharing of experience.

35. In many countries, *biosafety activities are not mainstreamed into broader national development plans and sectoral policies and programmes*, including the national biodiversity strategies and action plans. The meeting of the Parties may wish to urge Parties to take proactive steps to mainstream biosafety into relevant sectors and in particular work with the CBD focal points during the ongoing revision of the NBSAPs to integrate the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

36. Various reports have also revealed that a number of *biosafety capacity-building projects are not systematically tracked, evaluated and reported.* The evaluation reports of many previous biosafety projects have not been made public. The meeting of the Parties may wish to urge Parties other Governments and relevant organizations to conduct evaluations of their biosafety projects based on prior agreed indicators and share the reports through the BCH.

37. Finally as noted in various reports many countries have acknowledged the *importance of a regional approach to capacity-building.* However, regional and subregional initiatives need to be driven by the countries concerned. The meeting of the Parties may wish to invite Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations that have not yet done so to consider adopting a regional approach to foster the sharing of information and technical resources, enhance coherence and synergy of capacity-building activities and maximize the use of institutional, technical and human resources available within a region.

38. In general, various reports have shown that the current approaches to capacity-building in biosafety have not been effective. There is a need to improve the approaches both from the conceptual and operational perspective. The meeting of the Parties may wish to consider the above synthesis and provide guidance to help Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to improve their biosafety capacity-building initiatives.

IV. REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COORDINATION MECHANISM

39. The Coordination Mechanism for the Implementation of the Action Plan was established to facilitate exchange of information with a view to promoting partnerships and maximizing complementarities and synergies between various capacity-building initiatives. This section provides a summary report on the implementation of the Coordination Mechanism and makes proposals for its streamlining and improvement. The report is based on the information available in the BCH, the feedback received by the Secretariat from Parties and the information contained in the report of the independent evaluation of the Action Plan:

(a) *The Liaison Group* has provided the Executive Secretary with advice on a number of issues, including advice on measures for improvement of the roster of experts on biosafety and played a key role in the development of the capacity-building components of the draft Strategic Plan for the Protocol and of the draft programme of work on public awareness, education and participation. To date, nine meetings of the Liaison Group have been held;⁷

(b) *The capacity-building databases* have facilitated exchange of information on biosafety capacity-building projects, one-off opportunities, academic courses and country needs. Over 370 records on capacity-building initiatives (projects, stand-alone/one-time opportunities/activities such as fellowships, and biosafety academic courses) have been registered in the databases providing a wide range of useful information. The main weakness of this element is the dependence on governments and relevant organizations to upload and update their information which has not been done regularly;

(c) *The coordination meetings* provided a useful forum for relevant stakeholders to share information, experiences and ideas on how to improve capacity-building for specific issues and to network and build relations. To date, eight coordination meetings for Governments and organizations implementing or funding biosafety capacity-building activities have been held.⁸ The meetings have made a number of recommendations on measures to enhance the capacities of Parties on various technical issues on which capacity-building guidance and support was required. Initially the level of participation in the meetings was good but in recent years participation has declined. Donor agencies have not actively taken part as had been anticipated and this has partly undermined the effectiveness of the meetings since one of the main goals was to bring together donors and the recipient countries. It is time to review whether these coordination meetings are really necessary in view of declining number of biosafety projects. Information could probably be exchanged through means other than meetings;

(d) *The information-sharing and networking mechanism* currently comprises the Biosafety Information Resource Centre (BIRC) and the Biosafety Capacity-Building Portal, both established in the BCH.⁹ The BIRC is basically a “virtual library” consisting of various publications, tools and information

⁷ Reports of the Liaison Group meetings are available at: http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/cpb_art22_liaison.shtml.

⁸ Reports of the coordination meetings can be accessed at: http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/cpb_art22_meetings.shtml. Three meetings of academic institutions and organizations involved in biosafety education and training have also been held.

⁹ The BIRC can be accessed at: <http://bch.cbd.int/database/resources> and the Biosafety Capacity-Building Portal at: http://bch.cbd.int/onlineconferences/portal_art22/cb_main.shtml.

resources. In general, the BIRC has been successfully implemented. It currently contains over 1,372 records on various biosafety-related topics, including 85 records on capacity-building (e.g. project evaluation reports, toolkits and workshop reports). The Online Biosafety Capacity-Building Portal includes platforms that allow individuals interested in or involved in biosafety capacity-building and research activities to exchange information and network through online discussion forums, collaborative portals, and restricted workspaces for specific groups or networks of experts on specific issues, has had limited success so far. To date, three online forums on capacity-building have been organized. However, participation in those forums has been relatively low. A collaborative portal on capacity-building for customs officials was also established in 2008.¹⁰

(e) *The reporting mechanism* was operationalized through the capacity-building database.¹¹ An additional component/field was included in the common format for capacity-building initiatives (projects and/or one-off opportunities) to enable Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to include or upload reports (progress reports or end-of-cycle reports) on those initiatives as part of the same record, instead of establishing a separate database for such reports as had been envisioned when the Coordination Mechanism was established. To date, 16 reports have been submitted in the capacity-building database out of the 370 capacity-building initiatives recorded in the database. This low reporting level indicates that this element has not been successfully implemented. The meeting of the Parties may wish provide guidance on how to improve the sharing of reports on completed capacity-building initiatives to enable Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to learn from each others' experiences, accomplishments, success stories and lessons learned.

40. The report of the independent evaluation of the Action Plan noted that, although it has not fully realized its objective, the Coordination Mechanism has in general played a key role in facilitating the sharing of information and experiences on biosafety capacity-building initiatives, particularly through the capacity-building databases established in the BCH, the online forum established in the BCH, and during the first few years, through the coordination meetings. However the report also noted that there is little evidence of actual coordination among stakeholders, for example, through joint work plans or strategy development that could be directly attributed to the Coordination Mechanism. In this regard, it called for a review of the operation of the Coordination Mechanism, including a review of the need, purpose and organizational modalities of the coordination meetings. The UNU-IAS report also underlined the importance of coordination and collaboration among capacity-building initiatives and donor support programmes and highlighted the need to examine the future role and relevance of the Coordination Mechanism.

41. At its ninth meeting, the Liaison Group on Capacity-building for Biosafety reviewed and provided advice on measures to improve the Coordination Mechanism for the Implementation of the Action Plan. Members of the Liaison Group made the following observations and recommendations:

(a) The original objective of the Coordination Mechanism is still valid. However, it needs to be refined to take into account the new developments since the Coordination Mechanism was adopted;

(b) One of the intended aims of the Coordination Meetings to bring together donors/agencies providing technical support and the recipient countries has not been fully realized. In part this is due to the low priority given to biosafety by donor agencies and the limited participation of donor agencies in the meetings. In this regard, it was recommended that Parties to the Protocol and the Secretariat should explore possibilities of enhancing the engagement of donor agencies;

¹⁰ The collaborative portal on capacity-building for customs officials can be accessed at: https://bch.cbd.int/onlineconferences/portal_art18/htpi_customs.shtml.

¹¹ Biosafety capacity-building database: <http://bch.cbd.int/database/activities/>

(c) The participation of implementing institutions and organizations in the coordination meeting needs improvement in order to promote synergies and avoid duplication;

(d) Coordination meetings have increasingly played a role of providing directly to the meetings of the Parties recommendations on capacity-building with respect to various specific technical issues/topics. This has in part led to an overlap with the mandate of the Liaison Group. In this regard, it was recommended that the coordination meetings should focus on facilitating the sharing of knowledge, views and operational experience.

42. The Liaison Group also made the following recommendations with regard to the elements of the Coordination Mechanism in light of the operational experience since its establishment in 2004:

(a) Element 5 (Reporting mechanisms) be merged with element 2 (capacity-building databases) as they are currently operationally linked;

(b) Element 3 (information-sharing and networking mechanism) and element 4 (coordination meetings and workshops) be merged into one element. The focus of this element would be to facilitate the sharing of information, experiences, good practices and lessons learned and the exchange of new ideas primarily through online discussions organised under the “online forum on capacity-building” and, as appropriate and subject to the availability of funds, through face-to-face meetings.

43. The meeting of the Parties may wish to restructure and streamline the Coordination Mechanism taking into account the above progress report and the recommendations of the Liaison Group.

V. SUGGESTED ELEMENTS OF A DRAFT DECISION

44. The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Protocol may wish to consider the following elements of a draft decision:

Comprehensive Review of the Action Plan

(a) Take note of the report on the status of capacity-building under the Protocol, including the progress report on the implementation of the updated Action Plan contained in the present note by the Executive Secretary (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/7);

(b) Welcome the report of the independent evaluation of the updated Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Protocol contained in document (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/INF/2);

(c) Adopt a Framework and Action Plan for Capacity-Building for the Effective Implementation of the Protocol (draft contained in the annex to document UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/7/Add.1) replacing the updated Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Biosafety Protocol;

(d) Invite Parties and other Governments, the Global Environmental Facility, relevant organizations and donors to take into account the capacity-building framework and action plan in providing financial and technical support to developing countries and countries with economies in transition;

(e) Invite Parties, other Governments, and relevant organizations to implement the capacity-building framework and action plan referred to above and share their experiences through the Biosafety Clearing-House;

(f) Request the Executive Secretary to prepare, for consideration by the regular meetings of the Parties, reports on the status of implementation of the capacity-building framework and action plan, on the basis of the submissions made by Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations;

(g) Decide to review the capacity-building framework and action plan in conjunction with mid-term review of the Strategic Plan for the Protocol and the third assessment and review of the effectiveness of the Protocol;

(h) Request the Executive Secretary to raise awareness of the capacity-building framework and action plan and encourage regional stakeholders and donors to play a greater role in supporting its implementation by Parties;

(i) Also request the Executive Secretary to continue supporting Parties through strategic capacity-building activities, including regional and subregional training workshops and development of online training modules;

Coordination Mechanism

(j) Take note of the report of the seventh and eighth coordination meetings for Governments and organizations implementing or funding biosafety capacity-building activities contained in document UNEP/CBD/COP-MOP/6/INF/6;

(k) Also take note of the review of the Coordination Mechanism contained in section IV of the present document (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/7) prepared by the Executive Secretary;

(l) Decide to restructure and streamline the Coordination Mechanism as contained in the annex hereto;

(m) Invite donor countries and agencies and organizations providing capacity support in biosafety to participate more actively in the coordination mechanism;

Strategic approaches to capacity-building

(n) Take note of the analysis of strategic approaches to capacity-building contained in section III of the present document;

(o) Invite Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to consider adopting the following strategic approaches with a view to improving the design, delivery, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of biosafety capacity-building initiatives:

- (i) Develop coherent national strategies or action plans identifying what capacities to be built, for whom, on what topics, and to what end to guide the capacity efforts;
- (ii) Ensure rigorous appraisal and effective design of capacity-building initiatives based on systematic and participatory stocktaking and needs assessments in order to make the initiatives more strategic, demand-driven and cost-effective;
- (iii) Diversify approaches to human resources development beyond seminars and workshops to include formal education and training programmes, learning by doing approaches, staff exchanges, peer-to-peer learning through professional networking, and self-instruction (for example through online courses);
- (iv) Promote formal academic training in biosafety at graduate and post-graduate levels in order to develop a cadre of biosafety experts in various fields;

- (v) Broaden the scope and depth of training activities and link the training to specific areas of professional responsibilities (including risk assessment, risk management, LMO detection, liability and redress and others);
 - (vi) Adopt a systematic approach to training in biosafety involving, *inter alia*, thorough training needs assessments, setting of clear training objectives, use a wide of a range of customized methods and tools, evaluation of training activities and effective follow-up;
 - (vii) Promote the “training-of-trainers” approach and ensure that the trained trainers have the necessary institutional support, structures, facilities and resources to be able train others;
 - (viii) Maximize existing opportunities for distance-learning, including interactive e-learning modules available online and on CD-ROM in order to increase the number of participants benefiting and help to reduce the cost of training;
 - (ix) Institutionalize short-term biosafety trainings (including seminars and workshops), which are currently offered on an ad hoc one-off basis by various government departments and organizations, under designated national or regional training institutions, to facilitate their delivery in a systematic, integrated and efficient manner;
 - (x) Review the criteria for selection of recipients of training and other capacity-building activities to ensure that a wide range of participants, from both government and non-government organizations, who are in most need, have the requisite background and are in position to apply the acquired knowledge and skills are given due consideration;
 - (xi) Adopt a long-term perspective and a phased multi-year approach to capacity-building within the context of the national capacity-building strategies, the national biosafety frameworks and the global Strategic Plan for the Protocol.
 - (xii) Incorporate in all capacity-building initiatives measures to ensure the sustainability of their results, including retention of the knowledge and capacity built, once the funding and external support ends;
 - (xiii) Take proactive steps to mainstream biosafety into national development plans and sectoral policies and programmes and in particular work with the CBD focal points during the ongoing revision of the NBSAPs;
 - (xiv) Ensure that all biosafety capacity-building projects are systematically tracked and evaluated based on prior agreed indicators and share evaluation reports through the BCH;
 - (xv) Consider adopting a regional approach to capacity-building in biosafety to, *inter alia*, foster the sharing of information and technical resources, enhance coherence and synergy of capacity-building activities and maximise the use of institutional, technical and human resources available within the respective regions.
- (p) Request the Executive Secretary to provide, as appropriate and subject to the availability of funding, technical support to Parties to implement the above measures in order to enhance the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of capacity-building initiatives.

*Annex***COORDINATION MECHANISM FOR CAPACITY-BUILDING EFFORTS UNDER THE
CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY****A. Objective**

1. The objective of the Coordination Mechanism is to facilitate coordination, cooperation and exchange of information with a view to promoting complementarity and maximizing synergies between various capacity-building initiatives in order to minimize duplication of effort and foster efficient utilization of available resources.

B. Guiding Principles

2. The Coordination Mechanism shall be guided by the following basic principles:

(a) The purpose of the mechanism shall be to facilitate the sharing of information regarding biosafety capacity-building initiatives and not to supervise, control or evaluate different initiatives;

(b) Participation in, and exchange of information through the Coordination Mechanism shall be voluntary and open to all interested stakeholders;

(c) The mechanism shall be a simple, flexible and easily accessible system and its operation shall involve minimal additional resource requirements;

(d) The mechanism shall be operationalized in a phased and incremental manner;

(e) The mechanism shall complement and add value to, and not compete with, existing coordination and networking initiatives at national, regional and international levels.

C. Elements of the Coordination Mechanism

3. The Coordination Mechanism shall consist of the following three core elements:

(a) Liaison Group on capacity-building in biosafety;

(b) Biosafety capacity-building databases; and

(c) Information-sharing and networking mechanism.

1. Liaison Group on Capacity-building in Biosafety

4. The Liaison Group shall be a small ad hoc group of experts (not a standing body) constituted and convened by the Executive Secretary in a transparent manner to address specific capacity-building issues/topics, as need arises. It shall be composed of no more than fifteen experts selected from among Parties, with due regard to equitable geographical representation and gender balance, and a limited number of experts from relevant organizations not exceeding one third of experts from Parties. Members of the Liaison Group shall serve in their individual capacity and not as representatives of their Governments or organizations. Every effort shall be made to ensure any one meeting of the group includes some members that attended previous meetings in order to maintain some level of continuity and institutional memory.

5. The mandate of the IAC is to provide expert advice to the Executive Secretary on ways and means to enhance the coordination and effective implementation of the capacity-building components of the Strategic Plan for the Protocol.

6. Operations of the liaison group will follow the guidance on the expert and liaison groups contained in the consolidated *modus operandi* of SBSTTA (annex III to decision VIII/10 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention). To the extent possible, the Liaison Group shall conduct its work using electronic means, including e-mail, online discussions through a restricted collaborative portal and teleconferences. Face-to-face meetings of the Group may be organized, subject to availability of resources, back-to-back with other meetings.

2. *Biosafety capacity-building databases*

7. The capacity-building databases shall serve as a central repository of information on biosafety capacity-building initiatives around the world (including projects, one-off activities and opportunities, and academic courses), as well as information on country needs and available tools and resource materials. Reports and/or web links to reports on completed initiatives, including summaries of major accomplishments and lessons learned shall be incorporated into the database for capacity-building initiatives.

8. The databases will facilitate timely and structured access to information on completed, ongoing and planned initiatives. This will allow users to identify overlaps and gaps in the geographic and thematic coverage of existing capacity-building initiatives, in order to minimise duplication of efforts and resources, facilitating leverage of resources, and identifying opportunities for collaboration, joint actions and synergies.

9. The databases shall be maintained through the BCH. Common formats shall be used to facilitate submission of information in a structured and consistent manner and also facilitate customized searching of the databases. Persons designated by governments or relevant organizations shall be able to register and update information in the databases through the BCH management centre using a password system.

3. *Information-sharing and networking mechanism*

10. The focus of this element shall be to facilitate informal but systematic sharing of information, experiences, good practices and lessons learned from capacity-building initiatives as well as exchange ideas on how to address identified needs, challenges and emerging issues. This shall be done primarily through the “online forum on capacity-building”.

11. The online forum shall provide a platform for individuals interested in or involved in biosafety capacity-building and research activities to interact, build relations, network and share information, and learn from each others’ operational experiences. They will also give stakeholders an opportunity to brainstorm and share their views, suggestions innovative ideas to improve the design and delivery of capacity-building initiatives. Furthermore, they will provide participants an opportunity to build a common understanding of the general capacity-building issues, needs and the strategic approaches to address those needs, and to foster dialogue and consensus on key issues.

12. A wide range of online tools including online discussion groups, collaborative portals and restricted workspaces for specific groups or expert networks, and e-mail listservs as well as through real-time online conferences shall be used, as appropriate.

D. Administration of the Coordination Mechanism

13. The Coordination Mechanism shall be administered by the Executive Secretary, whose primary functions will include the following:

(a) Maintaining the capacity-building databases, including their regular updating based on submissions received from Parties, other Governments, relevant organizations and donors;

(b) Facilitating the dissemination of information and lessons learned shared through the Coordination Mechanism;

(c) Convening and servicing meetings of the liaison group on capacity-building in biosafety, and coordination meetings, as necessary;

(d) Preparing reports on operations of the Coordination Mechanism for consideration by the meetings of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol;

(e) Promoting awareness of the Coordination Mechanism and encouraging various stakeholders, including donor countries and agencies and organizations providing capacity-building support, to participate more actively in its activities.
