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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

Seventh meeting

Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea, 29 September-3 October 2014

Item 12 of the provisional agenda*

REPORT OF THE AD HOC TECHNICAL EXPERT GROUP ON RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT UNDER THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY**

INTRODUCTION

1. In its decision BS-VI/12, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol (COP-MOP) decided to bring to a close the previous Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Risk Assessment and Risk Management and establish a new AHTEG on Risk Assessment and Risk Management. In the same decision, COP-MOP decided to extend the Open-ended Online Forum on Risk Assessment and Risk Management.
2. In accordance with the terms of reference annexed to the decision, the Online Forum and AHTEG were mandated to work primarily online on the following issues in the given order of priority:
 - (a) Provide input, inter alia, to assist the Executive Secretary in his task to structure and focus the process of testing the guidance, and in the analysis of the results gathered from the testing;
 - (b) Coordinate, in collaboration with the Secretariat, the development of a package that aligns the Guidance on Risk Assessment of Living Modified Organisms (e.g. the Road map) with the training manual “Risk Assessment of Living Modified Organisms” in a coherent and complementary manner, for further consideration of the Parties, with the clear understanding that the Guidance is still being tested;
 - (c) Consider the development of guidance on new topics of risk assessment and risk management, selected on the basis of the needs of Parties and their experiences and knowledge concerning risk assessment.
3. Through the joint activities listed above, the Online Forum and AHTEG were expected to develop and achieve the following:

* UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/7/1.

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(a) Moderated online discussions relating to the testing of the practicality, usefulness and utility of the Guidance;

(b) A package that aligns the Guidance on Risk Assessment of Living Modified Organisms (e.g. the Roadmap) with the training manual “Risk Assessment of Living Modified Organisms” in a coherent and complementary manner; and

(c) A recommendation on how to proceed with respect to the development of further guidance on specific topics of risk assessment, selected on the basis of the priorities and needs indicated by the Parties with the view of moving toward the operational objectives 1.3 and 1.4 of the Strategic Plan and its outcomes.

4. In response to the COP-MOP requests, several activities were held in the form of online discussions of the Online Forum and AHTEG between December 2012 and May 2014. In an online discussion held in May 2013, AHTEG elected Mr. Helmut Gaugitsch as the Chair of the Group.

5. In finalizing the process to achieve the outcomes as contained in decision BS-VI/12, the AHTEG held its face-to-face meeting in Bonn from 2 to 6 June 2014. The list of participants to the meeting is annexed hereto as annex I.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

6. The meeting was opened on Monday, 2 June 2014 at 9.00 a.m. by the Chair of AHTEG.

7. In his opening remarks, Mr. Gaugitsch welcomed the participants to AHTEG, emphasized the importance of the work ahead of the Group and elaborated on the need to establish a way forward in implementing the mandate of the Group.

8. Mr. Charles Gbedemah, on behalf of Mr. Braulio Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, welcomed the AHTEG members, noting the importance of the work ahead and thanked the Government of Germany for providing financial support and hosting the meeting. He also thanked the European Union for its financial support.

9. In his opening statement, the Secretary of State of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Mr. Robert Kloos, welcomed the participants in AHTEG and noted the potential benefits of LMOs in worldwide commercial applications, particularly in the areas of food and agriculture. He noted the importance of advancing the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol through the development of guidance as tools to assist Parties in conducting risk assessments.

ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

2.1. Election of a Rapporteur

10. The Chair invited the Group to elect a Rapporteur. Ms. Francisca Acevedo (Mexico) was elected Rapporteur.

2.2. Adoption of the agenda

11. The Chair invited the Group to consider and adopt the provisional agenda circulated by the Secretariat as document UNEP/CBD/BS/AHTEG-RA&RM/5/1. The agenda was adopted without amendments.

2.3. Organization of work

12. The Group agreed to proceed on the basis of the organization of work contained in annex II to the annotations to the agenda prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the AHTEG Chair and circulated as document UNEP/CBD/BS/AHTEG-RA&RM/5/1/Add.1.

13. The Group further agreed to work in plenary and to break into smaller groups, if needed.

ITEM 3. SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

14. The Group was invited to deliberate on the substantive issues in accordance with the agenda for the meeting, taking into account the background documents, which were made available by the Secretariat.

15. The Chair, in his introductory remarks, recalled that AHTEG is a multi-stakeholder consultative process led by the members from the Parties.

3.1. Analysis of the results gathered from the testing of the “Guidance on Risk Assessment of Living Modified Organisms”

16. Under this agenda item, the Chair recalled the terms of reference of AHTEG, as set out in decision BS-VI/12. That was followed by a brief overview of the relevant activities that had been carried out prior to the face-to-face meeting with a view to responding to the requests made in the decision.

17. The Chair invited Ms. Angela Lozan, moderator of the final round of discussion on this issue under the Online Forum, to provide a summary of the conclusions and recommendations emerging from that discussion, as outlined in UNEP/CBD/BS/AHTEG-RA&RM/5/1/Add.1, annex I, section A.

18. That was followed by a presentation by Ms. Manoela Miranda, of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on the process that had led to the development of tools to structure and focus the testing of the Guidance. Ms. Miranda also presented the analysis of the results of the testing, as contained in document UNEP/CBD/BS/AHTEG-RA&RM/5/2, and noted that some Parties were already using the Guidance for the purpose of conducting risk assessments. She informed the Group that a compilation of all comments and suggestions for possible improvements submitted through the testing was available as document UNEP/CBD/BS/AHTEG-RA&RM/5/3, and the original submissions from Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations were available through the Biosafety-Clearing House.¹

19. Following the introductions, the Chair invited the Group to a general discussion on the analysis of the results of the testing and proposals on possible ways forward on the issue.

20. After the initial round of discussions, a majority within the Group concluded that the Guidance, in its current version, was useful, practical and consistent with the Protocol, and that it took into account past and present experiences with LMOs. Those members were of the view that the Guidance, in its current version, should be endorsed and put to practical use.

21. The Group took note of the comments provided during the testing of the Guidance, and agreed on the importance to recommend a mechanism for analysing the comments provided with a view to updating the Guidance in a transparent manner. The Group was invited to brainstorm on the form that such a mechanism could take.

¹ Available at http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/testing_guidance_RA.shtml.

22. Based on the emerging views of the Group, the Chair presented a proposal for an operational plan with regard to the mechanism for updating the Guidance, as follows:

(a) After the seventh meeting of COP-MOP, the Secretariat will group the original comments provided through the testing of the Guidance and, after the eighth meeting of COP-MOP, the comments provided through the third national reporting system. The grouping will be done in the form of matrices based on the following categories:

- (i) Statements that do not trigger changes;
- (ii) Editorial and translational changes;
- (iii) Suggestions for changes without a specified location in the Guidance;
- (iv) Suggestions for changes to specific sections of the Guidance (ordered by line numbers).

(b) A sub-group of AHTEG composed of five members representing the Parties, taking into account regional and gender balance, will be formed to review the grouping of comments done by the Secretariat and work on the suggestions for changes referred to in (iii) and (iv) above;

(c) The sub-group will:

- (i) Streamline the comments by identifying which suggestions may be taken on board, and providing a justification for those suggestions that may not be taken on board;
- (ii) Provide concrete text proposals for the suggestions to be taken on board with a justification where the original suggestion was modified.

(d) The AHTEG will review all comments and suggestions with a view to presenting an updated version of the Guidance for consideration by COP-MOP at its ninth meeting;

(e) A progress report will be submitted to the COP-MOP at its eighth meeting.

23. In response to the suggested mechanism outlined above, in particular paragraph 22(b), the Chair noted that the Group could take advantage of the face-to-face setting and invited the Group to establish a sub-group to assist the Executive Secretary in his task to develop matrices that would form the basis for the grouping of the comments outlined in paragraph 22(a).

24. The Group agreed to establish a sub-group, taking into account geographical distribution and gender balance, composed of Ms. Marja Ruohonen-Lehto representing the Western European and Other States Group (WEOG), Ms. Francisca Acevedo representing the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), Mr. Wei Wei representing the Asian and Pacific region, Mr. Abisai Mafa representing the African region, and Ms. Angela Lozan representing the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region.

25. The sub-group met with members of the Secretariat for an initial discussion on the structure of the matrices referred to in paragraph 22(a) above.

3.2. Development of a package that aligns the Guidance on Risk Assessment of Living Modified Organisms (e.g. the Roadmap) with the training manual “Risk Assessment of Living Modified Organisms”

26. Under this agenda item, the Chair recalled the terms of reference for the AHTEG as set out in decision BS-VI/12, as relating to this issue. This was followed by a brief overview of the activities that took place under this agenda item to date with the view to implement the requests made in the decision.

27. The Chair invited Ms. Marja Ruohonen-Lehto, moderator of the final round of discussion on this issue under the Online Forum, to provide a summary of the conclusions and recommendations emerging from that discussion, as outlined in UNEP/CBD/BS/AHTEG-RA&RM/5/1/Add.1, annex I, section B.

28. In her remarks Ms. Ruohonen-Lehto stated that the Online Forum recommended that the Guidance and the Training Manual on Risk Assessment of LMOs remain as independent documents and that, within the Guidance, only the Roadmap would be aligned with the Manual. She noted that the outcome of this exercise, as mandated in decision BS-VI/12, is the draft graphic alignment of the Roadmap and the revised Manual.

29. The Chair invited Ms. Miranda to introduce the most recent version of the draft graphic alignment² to the Group. She informed the Group that the graphic alignment would be further developed into an interactive learning tool as requested in decision BS-V/12.

30. The Group was then invited to consider ways to improve the graphic alignment. During the discussions, participants praised the work carried out by the Secretariat in drafting the graphic alignment, and made some suggestions for its improvement. Those suggestions included adding more visual elements and an introductory section to explain the history of its development.

31. The revised version of the draft graphic alignment would be submitted for the consideration of COP-MOP at its seventh meeting.

3.3. Recommendation on how to proceed with respect to the development of further guidance on specific topics of risk assessment

32. Under agenda item 3.3, the Chair recalled the terms of reference of AHTEG as set out in decision BS-VI/12. That was followed by a brief overview of the activities that had been carried out under the agenda item to date with a view to complying with the requests made in the decision.

33. The Chair invited Ms. Francisca Acevedo, moderator of the final round of discussion on this issue under the Online Forum, to provide a summary of the conclusions and recommendations emerging from that discussion, as outlined in UNEP/CBD/BS/AHTEG-RA&RM/5/1/Add.1, annex I, section C.

34. Ms. Miranda then gave a presentation on the results of a dedicated survey on the status of the implementation of operational objectives 1.3, 1.4 and 2.2 of the Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety for the period 2011–2020.³ The results of the survey showed that the majority of Parties, in particular developing countries and countries with economies in transition, considered the existing guidelines inadequate to their needs on specific topics of risk assessment and risk management of LMOs.

2 Available at http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/cpb_art15/training.shtml.

3 Available as document UNEP/CBD/BS/AHTEG-RA&RM/5/5.

35. AHTEG was invited by the Chair to discuss a possible way forward for the development of further guidance on specific aspects of risk assessment. That was followed by a discussion to consider the topics for the development of further guidance that had been identified in the Online Forum, as well as the priorities and needs indicated by the Parties in the survey referred to in paragraph 34 above.

36. After a discussion on a possible way forward, it was agreed that the Online Forum and AHTEG would work together, primarily online, with a view to developing further guidance on prioritized specific topics of risk assessment. That work would require AHTEG sub-groups to be created, draft texts to be developed, rounds of revisions to be held, and external experts to be invited to provide inputs to different steps of the process, as appropriate, in order for the developed further guidance to be submitted to COP-MOP at its eighth meeting.

37. AHTEG then prioritized topics for the development of further guidance on the basis of the priorities and needs indicated by the Parties with a view to moving towards achieving operational objectives 1.3 and 1.4 of the Strategic Plan and its outcomes, as follows:⁴

- (a) Risk assessment of living modified organisms introduced in centres of origin and genetic diversity;
- (b) Risk assessment of living modified microorganisms and viruses;
- (c) Risk assessment of living modified fish.

38. In addition to the three prioritized topics above, AHTEG also identified the following list of topics for future consideration, if and when appropriate:⁵

- (a) Risk assessment of living modified animals;
- (b) Risk assessment of LM insects;
- (c) Risk assessment of living modified organisms created through use of dsRNA techniques, engineered to produce dsRNA or exposed to dsRNA;
- (d) Risk assessment of living modified organisms containing RNAi;
- (e) Risk assessment of living modified organisms produced through cisgenetics;
- (f) Risk assessment of living modified organisms that produce pharmaceutical and industrial products;
- (g) Risk assessment of nutritionally altered living modified plant;
- (h) Risk assessment of living modified organisms produced through synthetic biology;
- (i) Risk assessment and management of LMOs intended for introduction into unmanaged ecosystems;
- (j) Co-existence between LMOs and non-LMOs in the context of small scale farming;
- (k) Guidance on integrating human health into the environmental risk assessment;
- (l) Guidance on health impacts of LMOs and herbicides that are part of the technology package that accompanies them;

⁴ The topics listed are not ranked in any particular order.

⁵ The topics listed are not ranked in any particular order and include topics that were originally in documents UNEP/CBD/BS/AHTEG-RA&RM/5/1/Add.1 and UNEP/CBD/BS/AHTEG-RA&RM/5/5, noting that some topics were removed from the original lists as they are already being addressed by other fora under the Protocol.

(m) Guidance on the synergistic impacts of different herbicides that are part of the technology package that accompanies certain LMOs.

3.4. Mechanism for updating the background documents to the “Guidance on Risk Assessment of Living Modified Organisms”

39. Under agenda item 3.4, the Chair of AHTEG introduced the topic by outlining the experiences and challenges encountered while updating the lists of background documents linked to the Guidance during the last intersessional period in accordance with paragraph 6 of decision BS-VI/12.

40. The Group was then invited to consider possible ways to improve the existing mechanism based on the above-mentioned experiences.

41. In the course of its discussion, the Group proposed the following as possible improvements to the existing mechanism:

(a) The period for commenting on the background documents will be extended to three weeks and an automatic reminder could be sent after two weeks;

(b) The Secretariat could raise awareness of the background documents linked to the Guidance by, for example, adding information and links in the BCH and inviting experts in the specific topics of the Guidance to submit background documents;

(c) The Secretariat could improve the online-based workflow for background documents in such a way as to cause the reviewing mechanism to be triggered only when changes made to a record affect how a document is linked to the Guidance;

(d) The background documents could be indexed for author affiliation (for example, government, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and business).

42. Furthermore, the Group recommended the following criteria to assist in the implementation of the mechanism:

(a) Documents must be of acceptable scientific quality and relevant to risk assessment or to specific topics of the Guidance;

(b) A document should be referenced only in those sections of the Guidance where it is directly relevant;

(c) Taking into account an approach based on inclusiveness, whenever there is disagreement among the members of the Group, the Chair has the ultimate responsibility to accept or reject a document.

ITEM 4. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CONFERENCE OF PARTIES SERVING AS THE MEETING OF PARTIES TO THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY

43. Under agenda item 4, the Chair invited the AHTEG members to formulate their recommendations, including future actions on risk assessment and risk management, for consideration by the COP-MOP at its seventh meeting.

44. The Chair established a stepwise approach in which he invited all AHTEG members to brainstorm on possible recommendations for COP-MOP. The Chair synthesized the views and proposed a set of draft recommendations for further consideration. The members from Parties agreed on the set of recommendations attached hereto as annex II for consideration by the Parties at their seventh meeting.

ITEM 5. OTHER MATTERS

45. The possibility of discussing issues relevant to the work of AHTEG, as well as risk assessment and risk management in general, during the special session on implementation of the Protocol was discussed. The Chair encouraged members of AHTEG to share their experience in developing and applying the Guidance during the preparation phase for the special session as well as during the meeting of COP-MOP. The Chair noted that the use of the Guidance could contribute to the fulfilment of the obligations under the Protocol.

ITEM 6. ADOPTION OF THE MEETING REPORT

46. The draft report was introduced to the Group by the Rapporteur. The Chair invited the Group to consider the report, which was adopted as amended.

ITEM 7. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

47. The meeting was closed on Friday, 6 June 2014, at 11:15a.m.

*Annex I***LIST OF PARTICIPANTS****PARTIES****Austria**

1. Mr. Helmut Gaugitsch
Head of Unit
Department of Landuse & Biosafety
Environment Agency Austria
Spittelauer Lände 5
Vienna A-1090
Austria
Tel.: +43 1 31 304 3133
Fax: +43 1 31 304 3700
E-Mail: helmut.gaugitsch@umweltbundesamt.at
Web: <http://www.umweltbundesamt.at>

Belarus

2. Ms. Galina Mozgova
Senior Research Scientist
Laboratory of Genetics and Cell Engineering
Institute of Genetics and Cytology,
National Academy of Sciences of Belarus
27 Akademicheskaya Street
Minsk 220072
Belarus
Tel.: +375172949182
E-Mail: g.mozgova@yaudex.ru

China

3. Mr. Wei Wei
Associate Professor
State Key Laboratory of Vegetation and
Environmental change, Institute of Botany
China Academy of Science
20 Nanxincun, Xiangshan
Beijing 100093
China
Tel.: +86 10 6283 6275
Fax: +86 10 6275 6287
E-Mail: weiwei@ibcas.ac.cn

Colombia

4. Ms. Elizabeth Hodson de Jaramillo
Profesora Emerita, Facultad de Ciencias
Pontificia Universidad Javeriana
Calle 125 N° 56-93
Bogotá
Colombia
Tel.: +571 253 8760
Fax: +57 1 6431713
E-Mail: ehodson@etb.net.co

Croatia

5. Mr. Hrvoje Fulgosi
Head of Laboratory
Department of Molecular Biology
Institute Rudjer Bošković
Bijenička cesta 54
Zagreb 10000
Croatia
E-Mail: fulgosi@irb.hr
Web: <http://www.irb.hr>

Egypt

6. Mr. Ossama AbdelKawy
Senior Scientist
Microbiology and Immunology
Egyptian Atomic Energy authority
Cairo 12551
Egypt
Tel.: +20 11 561 456
E-Mails: elkawyo@gmail.com, abdkawy@yahoo.com
Web: <http://eg.biosafetyclearinghouse.net>

Finland

7. Ms. Marja Ruohonen-Lehto
Head of Species Protection Unit
Natural Environment Centre
Finnish Environment Institute
Mechelininkatu 34 a
P.O.Box 140
Helsinki FIN-00251
Finland
Tel.: +358 400 148 641
Fax: +358 9 54902591
E-Mail: marja.ruohonen-lehto@ymparisto.fi
Web: www.vyh.fi/eng/environ/bdclearh/kansi1.htm

Germany

8. Ms. Beatrix Tappeser
Hess. Ministerium für Umwelt, Klimaschutz,
Landwirtschaft und Verbraucherschutz
Mainzer Str. 80
Wiesbaden 65189
Germany
E-Mail: beatrix.tappeser@umwelt.hessen.de

Japan

9. Mr. Nobuyuki Fujita
Biological Resource Centre
National Institute of Technology and Evaluation
2-5-8 Kazusakamatari
Kisarazu City Chiba Pref. 292-0818
Japan
Tel.: +81-3-3481-1921
Fax: +81-3-3481-1920
E-Mails: fujita-nobuyuki@nite.go.jp,
shioya-shun@nite.go.jp

Malaysia

10. Mr. Chan Kok Gan
Senior Lecturer, Genetics & Molecular Biology
Faculty of Science
University of Malaya
Kuala Lumpur 50603
Malaysia
Tel.: +603 7967 5162
Fax: +603 7967 7727
E-Mails: kokgan@um.edu.my, kokgan@gmail.com

Mexico

11. Ms. Francisca Acevedo
Coordinadora de Analisis de Riesgo y Bioseguridad
Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la
Biodiversidad
Av. Liga Periferico-Insurgentes Sur
No. 4903 Col. Parques del Pedregal
Mexico C.P. 14010
Mexico
Tel.: 52 55 50043173
Fax: 52 55 50043165
E-Mail: facevedo@conabio.gob.mx
Web: www.conabio.gob.mx

Republic of Moldova

12. Ms. Angela Lozan
Head of the Biosafety Office
Ministry of Environment
Str. Mitropolit Doseftei 156A, 305
Chisinau MD 2004
Republic of Moldova
Tel.: +373 22 22 68 74
Fax: +373 22 22 68 74
E-Mail: lozan@media.gov.md

South Africa

13. Ms. Wadzanayi Mandivenyi
Chief Director
Biodiversity Monitoring and Specialist Services
Department of Environmental Affairs
Private Bag X447
Pretoria 0001
South Africa
Tel.: +27 12 310 3696 / 3396
Fax: +27 12 320 7110
E-Mail: wmandivenyi@environment.gov.za

Zimbabwe

14. Mr. Abisai Mafa
Director
Agribusiness and Environment
Nature Power Consulting
1 Peirson Close
Harare, Zimbabwe
Tel.: +263 772 416454
E-Mail: absmaus@yahoo.com

OTHER GOVERNMENTS**Argentina**

15. Ms. Patricia Gadaleta
 Dirección de Biotecnología
 Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería y Pesca
 Av Paseo Colón
 922-2º Piso. Oficina 247
 Buenos Aires (1063)
 Argentina
 E-Mail: pgadal@minagri.gob.ar

Australia

16. Mr. Paul Keese
 Science Advisor
 Office of the Gene Technology Regulator
 Department of Health and Ageing
 MDP 54, GPO Box 9848
 Canberra ACT 2601
 Australia
 Tel.: +61 2 6271 4254
 Fax: +61 2 6271 4202
 E-Mail: paul.keese@health.gov.au

Canada

17. Mr. Philip Macdonald
 National Manager
 Plant Health and Biotechnology Risk Assessment Unit
 Canadian Food Inspection Agency
 1400 Merivale Rd
 Ottawa, ON K1A 0Y9
 Canada
 Tel.: +613 773 5288
 Fax: +613 773 5391
 E-Mail: philip.macdonald@inspection.gc.ca

ORGANIZATIONS**Bayer Cropscience**

18. Ms. Esmeralda Prat
 Global Biosafety Manager
 Regulatory Affairs
 Bayer Cropscience
 c/o Bayer Cropscience
 Technologiepark 38
 Gent B-9052
 Belgium
 Tel.: +32 9 335 2341
 Fax: +32 9 383 0200
 E-Mail: esmeralda.prat@bayer.com

College of the Atlantic

19. Ms. Doreen Stabinsky
 Professor
 College of the Atlantic
 105 Eden St
 Bar Harbor, ME 04609
 United States of America
 Tel.: +1 207 276 5284
 Fax: +1 207 288 3780
 E-Mail: doreenstabinsky@gmail.com
 Web: www.coa.edu

Flinders University

20. Ms. Judy Carman
 School of the Environment
 Flinders University
 P.O.Box 155
 Kensington Park SA 5068
 Australia
 Tel.: + 61 408 480 944
 E-Mail: judycarman@ozemail.com.au
 Web: <http://www.flinders.edu.au>

University of Canterbury

21. Mr. Jack Heinemann
 Director, Centre for Integrated Research on Biosafety
 School of Biological Sciences
 University of Canterbury
 Private Bag 4800
 Christchurch 8020
 New Zealand
 Tel.: +643 364 2500
 Fax: +643 364 2590
 E-Mail: jack.heinemann@canterbury.ac.nz

University of Minnesota

22. Ms. Karen Hokanson
Department of Horticultural Sciences
University of Minnesota
305 Alderman Hall, 1970 Folwell Ave.
St. Paul MN 55108
United States of America
Tel.: +1 612 624 2249
Fax: +1 612 624 4941
E-Mail: hokan018@umn.edu

SECRETARIAT OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

23. Ms. Dina Abdelhakim
Programme Assistant
Biosafety Division
Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
413 St. Jacques Street, Suite 800
Montreal, QC, H2Y 1N9
Canada
Tel.: +1 514 764 6355
Fax: +1 514 288 6588
E-Mail: dina.abdelhakim@cbd.int

25. Ms. Manoela Miranda
Environmental Affairs Officer
Biosafety Division
Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
413 St. Jacques Street, Suite 800
Montreal, QC, H2Y 1N9
Canada
Tel.: +1 514 287 8703
Fax: +1 514 288 6588
E-Mail: manoela.miranda@cbd.int

24. Mr. Charles Gbedemah
Senior Programme Officer
Biosafety Division
Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
413 St. Jacques Street, Suite 800
Montreal, QC, H2Y 1N9
Canada
Tel.: +1 514 287 7032
Fax: +1 514 288 6588
E-Mail: charles.gbedemah@cbd.int

*Annex II***RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CONFERENCE OF PARTIES SERVING AS THE MEETING OF PARTIES TO THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY**

The Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Risk Assessment and Risk Management,

Having noted that:

(a) The dedicated survey on the status of the implementation of operational objectives 1.3, 1.4 and 2.2 of the Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety for the period 2011–2020, conducted in accordance with decision BS-VI/12, considered, inter alia, existing guidelines on risk assessment and risk management;

(b) The results of the survey show that the majority of Parties, in particular developing countries and countries with economies in transition, consider that the existing guidelines on risk assessment and risk management on living modified organisms (LMOs) do not satisfy their specific needs, and that further guidance is needed;

(c) The results of the survey also show that some Parties among developing countries and countries with economies in transition are currently using and applying the “Guidance on Risk Assessment of LMOs” (hereinafter “the Guidance”) and the “Training Manual on Risk Assessment of LMOs” (hereinafter the “Manual”);

(d) The Guidance has undergone numerous revisions by the Online Forum and the AHTEG on Risk Assessment and Risk Management, scientific review and editing, as well as two testing exercises;

(e) The majority of Parties, in particular developing countries and countries with economies in transition, that participated in the testing of the Guidance concluded that the Guidance is useful, practical and consistent with the Protocol, and takes into account past and present experiences with LMOs;

(f) Many comments were provided during the testing of the Guidance for its further improvement.

1. On the basis of the above, AHTEG on Risk Assessment and Risk Management recommends the following:

Regarding the “Guidance on Risk Assessment of Living Modified Organisms”

2. Endorsement of the Guidance, and support for its use and application, in its current version, in actual cases of risk assessment and as a tool for capacity-building activities in risk assessment.

3. Formulation of questions regarding the use of the Guidance into the format of the third National Report on the implementation of the Protocol including suggestions for possible improvements.

4. Establishment of a mechanism for updating the Guidance as described in paragraph 22 of the report of AHTEG, having taken into account the notion that the Guidance is intended to be a “living document”, with a view to presenting an updated version of the Guidance for consideration by COP-MOP at its ninth meeting.

5. Consideration by COP-MOP at its ninth meeting of the need for a medium- or long-term mechanism for future updates of the Guidance.

Regarding the development of a package aligning the Roadmap and Manual

6. Endorsement of the package that aligns the Guidance and Manual as a useful online tool for, inter alia, capacity-building in risk assessment.

7. Requesting the Secretariat, subject to the availability of funds, to conduct capacity-building activities in risk assessment using the aligned package to facilitate the use and implementation of the Guidance, in its current version.

8. Inviting the Global Environmental Facility, Parties, other Governments and international organizations to provide funds and in-kind assistance to implement the capacity-building activities in risk assessment.

Regarding the development of further guidance on specific aspects of risk assessment

9. Establishment of a process, as outlined in paragraphs 36 and 37 of the report of AHTEG, for the development of further guidance on the following topics prioritized on the basis of the needs indicated by the Parties with the view of moving toward the operational objectives 1.3 and 1.4 of the Strategic Plan and its outcomes:

- (a) Risk assessment of living modified organisms introduced in centres of origin and genetic diversity;
- (b) Risk assessment of living modified microorganisms and viruses;
- (c) Risk assessment of living modified fish.

Mechanism and criteria for updating the background materials linked to the Guidance

10. Requesting the Executive Secretary to implement the improvements to the mechanism for submitting and retrieving background documents linked to the Guidance as outlined in paragraph 41 of the report of AHTEG.

11. Addition of the following criteria to assist in the implementation of the mechanism for regularly updating the list of background materials linked to the Guidance as established in decision BS-VI/12, paragraph 6:

- (a) Documents must be of an acceptable scientific quality, and relevant to risk assessment or to specific topics of the Guidance;
- (b) A background document should be referenced only in those sections of the Guidance where it is directly relevant;
- (c) Taking into account an approach based on inclusiveness, whenever there is disagreement among the members of the Group, the Chair has the ultimate responsibility for accepting or rejecting a document.

12. The goals of the recommendations in paragraphs 2 to 11 above could be achieved by extending the Open-ended Online Expert Forum on Risk Assessment and Risk Management and the AHTEG on Risk Assessment and Risk Management to work primarily online with revised terms of reference.
