

Ref.: SCBD/BSP/KGM/39890

28 November 2003

NOTIFICATION**Subject: Two new capacity-building tools for the Biosafety Clearing-House
(A Simple National Biosafety Clearing-House Application, and Offline BCH on CD-ROM)**

Madam/Sir,

As you are aware, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety entered into force on 11 September 2003. One of the obligations of Parties to the Protocol is the provision of information to the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH), established under Article 20 of the Protocol in order to facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, living modified organisms; and to assist Parties to implement the Protocol.

In response to a number of requests received by the Secretariat to assist governments in making information available to the BCH offline, and also to provide assistance to developers who are creating their own national biosafety databases, I am delighted to announce that the Secretariat has developed a preliminary version of a "simple National Biosafety Clearing-House Application (nBCH)", a copy of which is being provided to Cartagena Protocol and BCH National Focal Points on CD-ROM.

This software tool has been designed to achieve the following goals:

- **Off-line BCH data entry**
Many BCH users may not have a permanent or reliable Internet connection, or may find use of the Internet a very expensive option. The nBCH application will allow a user to enter and store national information locally even if Internet access is not available.
- **Data transfer to the Central Portal of the BCH**
Once national information has been entered into the nBCH, the data can be easily transferred to the Central Portal of the BCH, either via Internet upload if an Internet

To: Cartagena Protocol National Focal Points
BCH National Focal Points
cc: ICCP National Focal Points (where biosafety focal points have not yet been designated)
CBD National Focal Points (where biosafety focal points have not yet been designated)

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connection is available, or via other export options (including mailing information to the Secretariat for entry into the BCH).

- **Reference tool for systems developers**

Countries interested in setting up a national BCH node may find it useful to see how a simple stand-alone application can communicate with the Central Portal of the BCH. Systems developers have full access to the source code and are welcome to build their own application based on the interoperability logic used by the nBCH.

The nBCH application can also be freely downloaded at <http://bch.biodiv.org/national/>, and new versions of the files will be published periodically at this address as they become available. Two versions of the software are provided for your use: an **Official Version** (this is the version for officially registering national information on the Central Portal of the BCH. It communicates with the official BCH server bch.biodiv.org); and a **Demonstration Version** (this is a training version that has been designed for users to test the software and see how it works – information registered using this version is sent to the demonstration database bchdemo.biodiv.org, and does not affect the official information registered on the Central Portal of the BCH). The software requires Microsoft Access 2000 or higher to run (full installation instructions and other information is available on the CD, or at the website address provided above).

In addition, the Secretariat is also making available an **Offline version of the Central Portal of the BCH** on CD-ROM, which has been designed to allow users without an Internet connection to browse the information available on the Central Portal of the BCH (current as at 14 November 2003). This CD should run on any computer equipped with a web browser.

The Secretariat welcomes your thoughts on this initiative, and I invite you to send any feedback and suggestions for improvement to us. The pilot phase of the BCH is accessible on-line at <http://bch.biodiv.org>.

[signed]

Hamdallah Zedan
Executive Secretary