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**NOTIFICATION****Biosafety Clearing-House Discussion Forums Now Online**

The ICCP Recommendation 3/3, paragraph 3(c) of the annex calls for “collaboration between information-technology experts, national biosafety clearing-house focal points and partner organizations through, for example, the use of electronic discussion groups to facilitate cooperation and discussion.” This recommendation was reiterated by the Liaison Group of Technical Experts on the BCH, which met in April 2003, in particular to provide guidance to Information Technology experts dealing with the BCH.

In this regard, I am pleased to announce that discussion forums have been activated on the Biosafety Clearing-House (<http://bch.biodiv.org/Forums/>) in an effort to facilitate sharing of views and expertise on issues of relevance to the Biosafety Protocol, and in particular to assist people in the use of the BCH.

Registration and participation in the forums is freely available to all users, including the general public, although some topics are more relevant for specific categories of users, such as BCH National Focal Points.

The discussions are broadly divided into general and technical subjects. The topics available as a starting point are: Getting Started, User Support, Feature Requests, Capacity-Building, Interoperability and the Simple National BCH.

Accounts with the discussion forums are not linked to BCH user accounts, and a separate login and password is required to post in the forums. Accounts in the discussion forums are not secure and therefore users should NOT use the same login and password they use for registering information in the BCH.

To:

All BCH NFPs

All Cartagena Protocol NFPs (CBD National Focal Points where Cartagena Protocol NFPs have not yet been designated)



The forums are completely newsgroup-based and all users are requested to keep their posts strictly relevant to the topic at hand. The Secretariat moderates every list to ensure that spam and off-topic messages are not included in the posts. This may mean that there is a short delay (up to 24 hours) before your message shows up on the forum if it is your first post, and we apologize for any inconvenience. Please contact the Secretariat if you experience any difficulties in using the forums.

Yours sincerely,

Hamdallah Zedan  
Executive Secretary