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15 January 2015

NOTIFICATION

Socio-economic considerations (Article 26 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety): outline of inter-sessional activities in accordance with COP-MOP decision BS-VII/13

Dear Madam/Sir,

In its decision BS-VII/13 on socio-economic considerations, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP) extended, subject to availability of funds, the term of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on socio-economic considerations with a step-wise approach to a series of activities. The outputs of these activities are expected to be considered by the AHTEG in a face-to-face meeting and a report submitted to the eighth meeting of the COP-MOP for its consideration.

I would like to draw your attention to elements of the decision that request action from Parties, other Governments, relevant organizations and indigenous and local communities prior to the eighth meeting of the COP-MOP and the timeline proposed by the Secretariat for the implementation of the specified activities and preparation of the relevant documentation in a timely manner (see Annex 1).

As requested in paragraph 4 of the decision, I am pleased to invite Parties, other Governments, relevant organizations and indigenous and local communities to submit views and comments on the “Elements of a Framework for Conceptual Clarity on Socio-Economic Considerations” contained in the annex to the report of the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on socio-economic considerations and attached to this notification for ease of reference (see Annex 2). It would be appreciated if the information could be submitted as soon as possible but **no later than 13 March 2015**.

In order to facilitate the preparation of the online discussions requested in paragraph 5 of the decision, I am pleased to invite Parties, other Governments, relevant organizations and indigenous and local communities to nominate representatives to participate in the online discussion groups by completing and submitting the form available through the Socio-economic Considerations Portal in the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) at: http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/cpb_art26/portal.shtml. Forms should clearly indicate the nominee’s experience and expertise in the field of socio-economic considerations, including relevant work experience and publications, if any, relating to the handling and use of living modified organisms.

Kindly submit your nominations by sending the form duly completed to the Secretariat at secretariat@cbd.int as an e-mail attachment **no later than 27 February 2015**. Participants from the previous forum (March-April 2013) are not required to fill out a new form, but must nevertheless be officially endorsed by the relevant Focal Point to take part in these discussions. The endorsement letter

To: Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB) National Focal Points
CBD National Focal Points (where CPB Focal Points have not yet been designated)
Relevant organizations
Indigenous and local communities



Convention on
Biological Diversity

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may also be sent as an e-mail attachment to the Secretariat at secretariat@cbd.int no later than 27 February 2015.

I am also very pleased to inform you that, with the generous financial support from the Government of Norway, preparations are underway to engage a consultant to carry out the research as envisaged in paragraph 5 of the decision.

Please accept, Madam/Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias
Executive Secretary

Enclosure

Annex 1

Timeline for implementation of activities under decision BS-VII13

Date	Activity	Remarks
<p>Reports will be made available on the BCH in September 2015</p>	<p>Compilation of information on (i) policies, laws, regulations and guidelines providing for definitions of socio-economic considerations; and (ii) practical applications of socio-economic considerations in decision-making on living modified organisms, including cases where positive and negative socio-economic impacts have been considered</p> <p>and</p> <p>Study on international agreements that may have relevance to socio-economic considerations as provided for in Article 26 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety</p>	<p>Arrangements for hiring a consultant are underway</p>
<p>27 February 2015</p>	<p>Deadline to submit nominations to the online discussion groups</p>	<p>Nominations to participate in the online discussion groups may be made by submitting the form available through the BCH at http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/cpb_art26/portal.shtml</p>
<p>13 March 2015</p>	<p>Deadline for Parties, other Governments, relevant organizations and indigenous and local communities to submit views and comments on the “Elements of a Framework for Conceptual Clarity on Socio-Economic Considerations” contained in the annex to the report of the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Socio-economic Considerations</p>	<p>The submissions received to be compiled and synthesized for consideration by the AHTEG</p>
<p>April 2015</p>	<p>Online discussions to facilitate the exchange of views, information and experiences on socio-economic considerations in the context of paragraph 1 of Article 26 of the Protocol, including concerning: international obligations that may be relevant to socio-economic considerations; socio-economic considerations and the value of biological diversity to indigenous and local communities; environment-related aspects of socio-economic considerations, as well as the relationship, if any, with risk assessment and human health-related issues</p>	<p>Online discussion will be held on the different issues over a four week period. A summary of the discussions will be prepared for the consideration of the AHTEG</p>

**November/December
2015 (tentative)**

Second meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group
on Socio-economic Considerations (AHTEG)

Subject to availability of funds and offer to host

Desired outcome: Further development of conceptual clarity on SECs arising from the impact of LMOs on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking into account and improving upon the “Elements of a Framework for Conceptual Clarity on Socio-Economic Considerations” contained in the annex to the report of the first meeting of the AHTEG, and any information that may be provided through the activities indicated in 1, 2 and 3 above. The AHTEG should also work towards developing an outline for guidance with a view to making progress towards achieving operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan and its outcomes

A report of the AHTEG will be submitted to the eighth meeting of the COP-MOP for its consideration

Annex 2

*Annex to the Report of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Socioeconomic Considerations
(UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/7/11/Rev.1)*

ELEMENTS OF A FRAMEWORK FOR CONCEPTUAL CLARITY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

The Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group recalled operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety for the Period 2011-2020: “To, on the basis of research and information exchange, provide relevant guidance on socio-economic considerations that may be taken into account in reaching decisions on the import of living modified organisms” as well as the outcomes for this objective, including the development of guidelines regarding socio-economic considerations of living modified organisms. The Group noted the mandate it had been given in decision BS-VI/13, i.e. to review the outcomes of the online discussion forum, the regional online real-time conferences and the global overview of information on socio-economic considerations, and, on this basis, to develop conceptual clarity in the context of paragraph 1 of Article 26.

The Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group examined these outcomes as reported by the Secretariat and as contained in the documents prepared for the meeting, and recognized the challenges involved in the development of conceptual clarity on socio-economic considerations. Recognizing that there is no single agreed definition of what is meant by “socio-economic considerations”, the group decided to adopt a descriptive approach to reach conceptual clarity. In this regard, the group suggested the following elements of a framework, adapted as appropriate to national and regional specificities and consistent with international obligations, for addressing socio-economic considerations.

Objective

To assist Parties to achieve clarity in taking into account socio-economic considerations in the decision-making process on living modified organisms, by identifying and evaluating their potential socio-economic impacts, in accordance with the objective and scope of the Protocol.

General principles

1. Paragraph 1 of Article 26 provides that Parties may take socio-economic considerations into account in decision-making on living modified organisms.
2. Taking socio-economic considerations into account in decision-making on living modified organisms should be consistent with relevant international obligations, which include trade agreements, environmental agreements and human rights agreements.
3. Taking socio-economic considerations into account in decision-making on living modified organisms should be consistent with existing national regulatory frameworks and policies.
4. In taking socio-economic considerations into account, Parties should consider their local, national and regional circumstances, cultural practices, priorities and needs, in particular those related to the value of biological diversity to indigenous and local communities.
5. Taking socio-economic considerations into account in decision-making on living modified organisms should be clear, transparent, and non-discriminatory.
6. Human health-related issues arising from impacts of living modified organisms on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity should also form part of socio-economic considerations, provided that they are not already addressed in the risk assessment.
7. A situation of uncertainty or insufficient information on socio-economic impacts should not prevent socio-economic considerations from being taken into account in reaching a decision.
8. Conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity relies on a wide range of elements, including socio-economic ones, which supports the application of sustainability principles.
9. Planning and conducting risk assessments and taking socio-economic considerations into account may be complementary in the decision-making process.

10. Public participation and consultation form part of the process of taking socio-economic considerations into account.

Methodological considerations

1) Scope

The scope of methodologies could include the following issues:

- Economic
- Social
- Ecological
- Cultural / traditional / religious / ethical
- Human health-related

2) Methodological approaches

A wide array of methodological approaches is available to address the complexity of socio-economic considerations, which could include the following:

- Situational analysis and baseline information
- Scenario planning
- Ex-ante and/or Ex-post studies
- Quantitative and/or qualitative studies
- Public consultation and participation modalities
- Multi-criteria analysis
- Socio-economic impact assessments
- Valuation of biological diversity

Any methodology selected should be based on, *inter alia*, the information needs of decision makers.

3) Factors affecting methodological approaches

- Macro-, micro- or market structure levels of analysis, depending on the organism, trait and intended use
- Context and/or case specific at the level of the organism, trait and intended use
- The different stakeholders involved in the design of the socio-economic assessment
- The variation of socio-economic considerations among States and at the subnational level.

Points to consider

1. Any list of elements of socio-economic considerations would be indicative and non-exhaustive.
2. Listing elements of socio-economic considerations based on existing experiences and as contained in the document that summarized the online discussions (document UNEP/CBD/BS/REGCONF-SEC/2/INF/1) would contribute to the future development of guidelines on socio-economic considerations.
3. Elements of socio-economic considerations may be classified using the dimensions below.
4. Elements of socio-economic considerations could fall into more than one dimension.

5. Human health-related and ecological dimensions that are not addressed in risk assessment may be addressed when taking socio-economic considerations into account.

Dimensions:

- (a) Economic: e.g. impact on income;
- (b) Social: e.g. impact on food security;
- (c) Ecological: e.g. impact on ecosystem functions;
- (d) Cultural/traditional/religious/ethical: e.g. impact on seed saving and exchange practices;
- (e) Human health-related: e.g. impact on nutritional status.
