



PRESS RELEASE

New and improved Biosafety Clearing-House platform now available online to assist Parties in implementing the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

- *New user-friendly platform helps ensure consistency between three main clearing houses of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its Protocols*
- *Biosafety-Clearing House is a key tool for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and thus an open-source platform that enables governments and others to access the latest information on developments in the biosafety arena*
- *The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, a supplementary agreement to the CBD, provides international rules that seek to ensure an adequate level of protection to biodiversity and human health, focusing on transboundary movements of living modified organisms.*

8 December 2021 – To ensure consistency among the platforms and strengthen coherence and integration between the three main clearing-houses of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), an improved Biosafety-Clearing House (BCH) platform is now available online to help align the BCH with the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House (ABSCH) and the CBD’s Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM).

The new BCH user interface has been developed to resemble, both in appearance and functionalities, the user interface of the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House with a view to ensuring coherence and integration between the clearing-houses.

“The Biosafety Clearing-House is at the core of the Cartagena Protocol implementation. The Protocol provides that Parties can take their own decisions on living modified organisms, but they must share these decisions and associated risk assessments with the world so other countries can also take informed decisions,” said Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, CBD Executive Secretary.

“This balance between concerns for biodiversity and sovereign rights is what makes the Cartagena Protocol a successful agreement, and in this light, the new BCH platform is clearly a necessity in our work and not a luxury.”

Key features of the new platform, which is consistent with current UX web design standards, include:

- Improved graphical representation of data.
- User-friendly and intuitive.
- Features similar to CHM and ABSCH, thus, easily recognizable to national and regular users.
- Improved, streamlined procedures for registering and publishing information.
- Simplified approach for record status tracking.
- New search tools:
 - new search interface hosts new features, while still preserving the multi-level search capability of previous BCH platform.
 - new search functionality for the BCH (and other clearing-houses) is the most advanced search tool built at the CBD Secretariat to-date.



- Better tools for display and the analysis of search results.
- Modern help materials to aid users in site navigation and the submission process, including in-browser tours that walk users through key functions on the BCH, as well as a “Knowledge Base” that provides thorough explanations of the site’s many facets.

The BCH’s completeness of data, its transparency and inclusiveness are fundamentally important in providing the correct balance sought by the Parties in assisting them with implementation of the Cartagena Protocol. While Parties are asked by the Protocol to take their own decisions on LMOs on the basis of risk assessments, it is the availability to the whole world of their decisions and their risk assessments that make the Cartagena Protocol a successful agreement, by setting a balance between environmental concerns and sovereign rights.

The BCH has successfully carried out this task by involving governments as well as a large part of the relevant stakeholder community, in the submission, management and availability of this data.

The completion of the migration to the new platform was greatly assisted with resources from the UNEP-GEF BCH III Project.

The BCH is free and available to everyone at <http://bch.cbd.int>.

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Opened for signature in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, and entering into force in December 1993, the CBD is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 196 Parties, the CBD has near universal participation among countries. The CBD seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous peoples and local communities, youth, women, NGOs, sub-national actors and the business community. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing are supplementary agreements to the CBD. The Cartagena Protocol, which entered into force 11 September 2003, seeks to protect biodiversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 173 Parties have ratified the Cartagena Protocol. The Nagoya Protocol aims at sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources in a fair and equitable way, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies. Entering into force 12 October 2014, it has been ratified by 132 Parties.

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