



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

Please Check Against Delivery

STATEMENT BY

HAMDALLAH ZEDAN
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

TO

THE LIAISON GROUP OF TECHNICAL EXPERTS ON THE
BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE (RECONVENED)

Nairobi, Kenya
27 – 28 September 2001

Distinguished Experts,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all to this important meeting here in Nairobi, and to thank all of you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to attend this meeting and share your expertise.

As you are aware, the ICCP mandated its Bureau to draw upon appropriate technical expertise to facilitate the development of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House, and to provide the management oversight of its development. In order to assist the Bureau in this task, I convened this Liaison Group meeting in Montreal, from 19 to 20 March 2001. Following this meeting, I conveyed your recommendations to the Bureau at its meeting on 21 March. At this meeting, the Bureau endorsed your recommendations and mandated the Secretariat to proceed with the development of the pilot phase along these lines.

I am pleased to inform you that the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House was launched in April of this year. In line with your recommendations, the Central Portal includes information relating to National Focal Points; Competent National Authorities; national and international laws; decisions taken under the Advance Informed Agreement procedure; decisions on LMOs for food, feed and processing; and national databases. The system has also been linked to the Biosafety Roster of Experts, a database on capacity-building projects and other related websites, including biosafety research organizations. In addition, we have implemented search facilities and designed a number of common formats for reporting information.

An online toolkit has also been prepared to assist in the establishment of national databases based on common formats and has templates and guidelines to assist in the input of data. This toolkit also contains detailed instructions on how to make existing databases interoperable with the Biosafety Clearing-House. We conveyed this information to other organizations, including OECD, UNIDO and ICGEB, along with draft Memoranda of Co-operation to formalize co-operation between the Secretariat and these organizations, in early May.

The Secretariat also organized two regional meetings, one for the African region and one for the GRULAC region, aimed at providing countries of those regions with an opportunity to identify their capacity-building needs and expectations with regard to the establishment of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing House. Similar meetings for the Asia/Pacific region and for the Central and Eastern European region are planned before February 2002.

At its first meeting, the ICCP requested the Secretariat to commission an independent and transparent review of the pilot phase. The Bureau considered this issue in July, and decided that the independent review of the pilot phase will be conducted after the second meeting of the ICCP. It was the view of the Bureau that the ICCP did not call for such a review to be conducted before its second meeting and that the process is at its early stage

and does not warrant a separate review from the oversight of a group of technical experts. Instead, the Bureau requested the Secretariat to reconvene the liaison group of technical experts on the Biosafety Clearing House, to undertake a technical review of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House. As the terms of reference for your review, we would like you to use the Note from the Bureau on technical issues associated with the implementation of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House, which was prepared in response to the recommendations from the first meeting of this Liaison Group.

Distinguished Experts,

As indicated earlier, we have implemented the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House in a relatively short time-frame. What we would now like to do is to concentrate on consolidating this progress, and ensure that we have a robust system that will allow countries the opportunity to begin the exchange of biosafety-related information, and to gain valuable experience for the operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House when the Protocol enters into force.

I shall therefore be grateful if, in addition to undertaking a technical review of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House, you could provide technical advice relating to future activities. Particular issues on which I would like you to focus your advice include:

- (a) Mechanisms to input data and update information in the Biosafety Clearing-House central portal directly online, by designated authorities without sacrificing the transparency, authentication and security needs of the Biosafety Clearing-House pilot phase;

- (b) Transition from the Biosafety Clearing-House pilot phase to the development of a fully functional and accessible Internet based Biosafety Clearing-House; and

- (c) Cooperation with other organizations, such as OECD, UNIDO and ICGEB, and national databases.

Distinguished Experts,

I would like to conclude by inviting the distinguished ICCP Bureau member from Switzerland, Mr. François Pythoud, to continue his Chairmanship of this Liaison Group.

I would also like to thank UNEP for their kind offer to host this meeting and also the Government of the United Kingdom, whose financial contributions made this Liaison Group meeting possible. Your support for this meeting is a clear demonstration of your goodwill in promoting the entry into force and implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. We look forward to the results of your evaluation and the valuable technical advice you will provide us and the Bureau with regard to improving the operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House under the Biosafety Protocol.

Thank you.