

Third Quarterly Progress Report on the
UNEP-GEF Project for Capacity Building for Effective Participation in the
Biosafety Clearing House (BCH)
December 2004

Introduction

1. This is an update of the activities that have been undertaken by the BCH team to enable countries to participate in the project in the last three months, October - December 2004.

Current Status

I. Developing Material for Training

2. Six interactive modules on the following topics have completed. These modules will be used as training tools by the regional experts to help countries understand their obligations relating to the BCH as Parties and in assisting them to use and enter information in the BCH.

- **Module 2.** “Introduction to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety”
- **Module 3.** “Introduction to the Biosafety Clearing-House”
- **Module 4.** “Introduction to the BCH Central Portal”.
- **Module 5.** “Finding Information on the BCH Central Portal”
- **Module 6.** “Technical Requirements for National Participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House ”
- **Module 7.** “Entering Information Using the Management Centre”

3. These modules have been developed, in collaboration with UNITAR and the content has been provided and reviewed by world-renowned experts in the field. They have also been reviewed and commented on by the SCBD.

4. Two modules are currently still under development. Module 1, “Biosafety and the Environment” and Module 8, “Knowledge Management”. The BCH team is currently working with STAP and other international bodies to develop the text for Module 1, and is working with experts and scientists who attended a consultation meeting in Geneva, 13-14 December 2004, to develop the terms of reference for Module 8. Minutes of the meeting can be found through the website www.unep.ch/biosafety and is discussed further below.

5. In addition, a curriculum and methodology for the training of regional experts has been developed in collaboration with UNITAR and InWEnt. This includes a two-week intensive curricula based on adult-learning methodologies to train regional experts to assist participating countries to:

- Make a choice of national participation in the BCH based on the options recommended by the SCBD;
- Assess their current situation vis-à-vis the BCH and to help them analyse their needs for the nBCH;

- Analyse and put in place a sustainability strategy to ensure that longer-term requirements for the continued use of the BCH are in place right from the beginning;
- Train at national level workshops on the use and obligations relating the BCH.

6. The first meeting of the regional experts is scheduled to start on 31 January 2005 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Please read below for more information on the selection process followed to decide on the regional experts.

II. Country-Level Participation

7. As of 31 December 2004, 51 countries have forwarded to the Biosafety Unit endorsement letters from their GEF Focal Points, informing us of their strong interest in participating. Of these, the first 50 countries are eligible to receive funds and support from the current BCH project. A list of the 50 countries is attached as Annex 1.

8. A workshop for the Pacific Region was held 2-5 November for the 14 Pacific Island countries to identify and discuss the issues related to their regional BCH. The report can be found on www.unep.ch/biosafety.

9. An "Operational Handbook" for countries to participate in the BCH project has been developed and forwarded to the 50 countries that are participating in the project. In addition, a sample MOU has been prepared by the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit and forwarded to these 50 countries. The "Operational Handbook" can be downloaded through our website www.unep.ch/biosafety.

10. Participating countries can, starting March 2005, access fully trained and knowledgeable regional experts to assist them with issues relating to their participation in and implementation of the project.

11. In addition, based on the recommendations of COP-MOP1, UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit has submitted to the GEF Council, for its November work programme, an add-on project to the current BCH project which will expand eligibility for 89 additional countries. The GEF Council, has, in principal, approved the add-on to the current BCH project, however, four countries have requested UNEP-GEF to re-circulate the project to the GEF Council members via the website after updating the project document to take into account concerns raised by these Council members.

12. Additionally, one Council member has requested for an evaluation of the current 50 country project, before expanding the project to include an additional 89 countries, as recommended by the COP-MOP1.

III. Regional experts

13. The BCH Team developed terms of reference for Regional Experts in September 2004. These were extensively reviewed by the SCBD and the panel of experts that had attended a meeting organised by the BCH Team in Bossey-Bogis in May 2004 to assist with the development of the terms of reference for the training package to be developed under the project.

14. The BCH Team, in October 2004, placed advertisements in a number of international and regional/sub-regional journals and newspapers to call for experts in information technology and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to apply to become regional experts, with a deadline for submission of application being put at 22 November 2004. Following table is a break-down of the applications received by region and the totals.

Formal Applications	CPB	IT
LAC	46	10
CEE	16	6
AP	38	28
Africa	47	46
Developed Countries	23	16
TOTAL	170	106
Informal Applications	11	39
Others (NOT APPLICABLE TO TOR)	92	
GRAND TOTAL APPLICATIONS:		368

15. A Selection Panel consisting of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Science and Advisory Panel of the GEF (STAP) and members of the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit met on 8 and 9 December 2004, to review the curriculum vitae (CV) of the applicants and to make the final selections. The SCBD was provided, through the Internet, with the CVs of all the pre-selected candidates and were also provided the opportunity to comment on the candidates before the selection was finalised.

16. An initial set of up to 30 experts have been invited to attend a training workshop in Kuala Lumpur from 31 January 2005. Upon successful completion of the workshop, experts will be offered contracts with UNEP-GEF to assist countries participate in the Biosafety Clearing-House. The training workshop for regional experts is being organised in collaboration with InWENT, UNITAR, SCBD and the governments of Canada, Switzerland and the USA.

IV. Collaboration with Partners

17. As reported in the last quarter, Environment Canada has confirmed US\$420,000 collaboration with the BCH project to assist 14 countries in the South Pacific to set-up a regional BCH to be hosted by SPREP in Apia, Samoa.

18. A workshop was held in Apia, Samoa 2-5 November 2004, in collaboration with Environment Canada SPREP and the UNEP-GEF Biosafety, to examine the initial needs of the 14 countries and to identify the best way forward to set-up the regional BCH. Unit. The report from this workshop is available through www.unep.ch/biosafety.

19. A member of the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Team also attended the first Informal Advisory Committee of the BCH in Montreal 9-10 November 2004.

20. In addition, the governments of Canada, Switzerland and the USA will be contributing an application each which can be used by countries to set-up their national participation in the BCH. The government of Germany is contributing through the collaboration with InWEnt.

V. Regional Consultation

21. At the First Meeting of the Parties of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP/1) in Kuala Lumpur in February 2004, based on the recommendation of MOP/1, COP 7 gave guidance to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to expand the eligibility of this BCH project to include all developing countries and countries with economies in transition which:

- Are Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity; and
- Provide clear political commitment towards becoming Parties to the Protocol through a written assurance to the Executive Secretary that the country will become a Party on completion of activities to be funded.

22. Based on this recommendation, the Secretariat for the Global Environment Facility included in their Institutional Relations (GEF/C.23/6) paper presented at the Council meeting in May 2004 the following response to the guidance "... the GEF proposes that the project *Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing House of the Cartagena Protocol*, approved by the Council at its meeting in November 2003 and implemented by UNEP, be expanded to provide assistance similar to that which is now available under the project for 50 Parties to the Protocol to all countries requesting such assistance that meet the eligibility criteria approved by the COP/MOP. The GEF will present to the Council for approval a request to include in the project the necessary additional resources after consultations with UNEP on how best to meet the additional requests."

23. During the GEF Council meeting in May 2004, the extension of the project to include countries based on the guidance of COP 7 was discussed. Para 61 of the Joint Summary of the Chairs cites "The GEFSEC and UNEP were requested to organize consultations of regional scientists and technical experts to advise on the project for building capacity for participation in the biosafety clearing house of the Cartagena Protocol before expanding the project pursuant to the guidance of the COP."

24. To respond to the request of the GEF Council, GEFSEC and UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit, organised a regional consultation of scientists and technical experts to advise on the project. This consultation was held in Geneva on 13-14 December 2004. The specific objectives of the consultation were to seek advice from regional scientists and technical experts on:

- The modular training package that has been developed by technical experts and in collaboration with UNITAR. This has been based on the recommendations of experts that met in May 2004 to develop a terms of reference for the training package; and
- The pedagogical curriculum and methodology developed in collaboration with InWEnt, for training of regional experts, who will assist countries to participate in the BCH.

25. The report from this meeting can be found on www.unep.ch/biosafety.

Annex 1
List of Potentially Eligible Countries for the BCH project approved in March 2004

ELIGIBLE COUNTRY	DATE OF BECOMING A PARTY TO CPB
Latvia	2/13/04
Belize	2/12/04
Tajikistan	2/12/04
Bangladesh	2/05/04
Grenada	2/05/04
Vietnam	1/21/04
Bahamas	1/15/04
Hungary	1/13/04
Egypt	12/23/2003
Brazil	11/24/2003
Madagascar	11/24/2003
Slovakia	11/24/2003
Iran	11/20/2003
Jordan	11/11/2003
Lithuania	11/7/2003
Turkey	10/24/2003
Ethiopia	10/9/2003
Senegal	10/8/2003
El Salvador	9/26/2003
Tonga	9/18/2003
Cambodia	9/17/2003
Antigua and Barbuda	9/10/2003
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	8/27/2003
South Africa	8/14/2003
Nigeria	7/15/2003
Romania	6/30/2003
Korea, Democratic People's Republic of	6/29/2003
Mongolia	6/22/2003
Palau	6/13/2003
Ukraine	12/6/2003
Ghana	5/30/2003
Tanzania, United Republic of	4/24/2003
Burkina Faso	8/4/2003
Moldova, Republic of	3/4/2003
Ecuador	1/30/2003
Marshall Islands	1/27/2003
Tunisia	1/22/2003
Slovenia	11/20/2002
Botswana	6/11/2002
Mauritius	4/11/2002
Mozambique	10/21/2002
Croatia	8/29/2002
Mali	8/28/2002
Nicaragua	8/28/2002
Belarus	8/26/2002
Bhutan	8/26/2002
Niue	7/8/2002
Djibouti	4/8/2002

Barbados	9/6/2002
Samoa	5/30/2002
Venezuela	5/13/2002
Bolivia	4/22/2002
Liberia	2/15/2002
Maldives	9/2/2002
Panama	5/1/2002
Nauru	11/12/2001
Lesotho	9/20/2001
Czech Republic	10/8/2001
Saint Kitts and Nevis	5/23/2001
Fiji	6/5/2001
Trinidad and Tobago	10/5/2000