United Nations Environment Programme

UNEP-GEF Projects on:

Development of National Biosafety Frameworks & Capacity Building for Effective Participation on the Biosafety Clearing House

Global Environment Facility

# Pacific Regional Meeting on Implementation of National Biosafety Frameworks (NBF) and Regional Cooperation, including the establishment of a Pacific Regional Node of the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH)

# REPORT

**Apia, Samoa, 21-25 November 2005**

*In collaboration with*

Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

Environment Canada Environnement Canada

Environment Canada

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# ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| BCH | Biosafety Clearing-House |
| CBD | Convention on Biological Diversity |
| CNA | Competent National Authority |
| CBDBCH | Global BCH hosted by the CBD Secretariat |
| CNBCH | Canadian Node of the BCH |
| CTA | Centre for Technical and Rural Cooperation |
| FAO-SAPA | Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations |
| GMO | Genetically Modified Organism |
| LMO | Living Modified Organism |
| nBCH | National BCH |
| NCC | National Coordinating Committee |
| NEA | National Executing Agency |
| NPC | National Project Coordinator |
| NPD | National Project Document |
| NBF | National Biosafety Framework |
| NBSAP | National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan |
| PICs | Pacific Island Countries |
| PIFS | Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat |
| PNBCH | Pacific Node of the BCH |
| SIDS | Small Island Developing States |
| SPC | Secretariat for the Pacific Community |
| SPREP | Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| USP | University of the South Pacific |

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The meeting covered the following topics:**

i. Sharing experiences and lessons learned in the development of NBFs;
ii. Implementation of NBFs;
iii. Capacity building for effective participation in the BCH, including a Pacific regional node of the BCH to support regional cooperation; and
iv. Areas for regional cooperation.

### i). Sharing of experiences in the development of National Biosafety Frameworks

*Presentations*

- Progress and Status of Development of NBF projects.
- Ten-minute country presentations.
- Recapping "what is a NBF?"
- Synthesis of country reports highlighting the different country-driven approaches.

*Key Issues discussed*

- Countries handled issues such as labeling, public awareness, and risk assessment & risk management differently.
- Pooling technical expertise for risk assessment at the regional level might be the only way some countries could carry out informed national decision-making.
- Continuity of capacity an important issue for Pacific island countries.
- Wherever possible, maintaining Project Coordinators was considered important; recognizing that changes in personnel in National Executing Agencies is unavoidable.
- No single approach suited all countries. Each country carried out the activities - and customized the toolkit - in ways that suited their own situation, capacities, and needs.
- In general, government biosafety policies in Pacific islands place focus on national development plans and strategies, and objectives of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAP).
- Harmonization of biosecurity and biosafety laws was considered important at the national level, but that it might be difficult to harmonize at a regional level, especially with respect to decision-making.
- PNG was the only country that addresses both biosafety and biotechnology in its NBF.
- Regional mechanisms and expertise could be called upon for technical advise, e.g., to verify or carry out risk assessment, but final decision would always be made at the national level.

**ii). Implementation of National Biosafety Frameworks**

*Presentations and Exercises*

- Recapping the Logical Framework Analysis approach.
- Country-experience (Samoa) in developing an implementation using the LFA approach.
- Logical Framework Analysis exercise.

*Key Points*

- Using local or regional consultants to assist in the development of implementation projects preferable.
- The main areas identified in the LFA exercise that could form the components for implementation projects were:
    - Governance,
    - Public Awareness/Public Participation, and
    - Capacity Building.

**iii). Capacity building for effective participation in the BCH, including a Pacific regional node of the BCH to support regional cooperation.**

*Presentations, Working Groups and Hands-on Exercises*

- Overview of the UNEP-GEF BCH project
- Canadian BCH – A Case Study
- Hands-on training on the Canadian Management Tool
- Joining the UNEP-GEF BCH project
- Hands-on use of the Central Portal of the BCH
- Working Groups: Topic: Hosting of National BCH
- Information Sharing and the SPREP Work Programme
-

*Key Issues*

- There was general consensus that a regional node was needed for information sharing and networking.
- Capacity building on the BCH to place focus at the national level rather than at the regional level.
- Technical capacity to develop and manage national BCHs was limiting in smaller PICs, and a regional node could provide technical backstopping by allowing networking between IT people.
- A Pacific regional node of the BCH could play an important role in ensuring sustainability beyond the 18 months of the UNEP-GEF BCH project.
- The benefits of a regional organisation like SPREP hosting a regional node, include the server behind a firewall, a reliable Internet connection in Samoa compared to most countries, and the website would be made available 24 hours a days 7 days a week. It would also have the added value of biosafety information being made available in the same place as, and could be integrated with, biodiversity and other environmental information.

- There are resource implications and technical issues that need to be explored further with SPREP. While these issues get clarified, other options for hosting a regional node will also be explored.

## iv) Areas for Regional Cooperation.

*Presentations, Working Groups, and Brainstorming Session*

- Working Groups – Topic: Human Resource Capacity for Risk Assessment
- Pacific Islands Biotechnology Working Group
- Brainstorming session on areas for regional cooperation in biosafety:
  i. What are the areas for potential regional cooperation?
  ii. What are the existing mechanisms / organisations that can provide opportunities for cooperation?

*Key Issues*

- The PIBWG could provide technical support for implementation of NBFs and promote regional cooperation.
- There is a need to integrate capacity building in biosafety, biosecurity, and biotechnology.
- The participants agreed on the following **areas for regional cooperation**:
  i. Access to technical experts - need for regional technical advisory body to assist countries without capacity and as required to supplement local expertise.
  ii. Sharing of information - e.g. interactive training, CDs, capacity building, implementation of NBF case studies, including BCH requirements, notices of regional meetings, location of field release of GMO where applicable, beyond Pacific region.
  iii. South-south cooperation, including sharing of local expertise.
  iv. Sharing technical manuals and guidelines where possible.
  v. Share public education materials - regional video in particular.
  vi. Biotechnology information / updates from regional organisations - and other countries (best format: multiple modes, internet, newsletters, video).
  vii. Develop MoUs between regional organisations - meeting with all relevant agencies proposed.
  viii. Training - opportunities for people from other countries to attend national training sessions - sharing of training resources.
  ix. Access to and sharing of facilities: equipment, labs - knowing where services are available.
  x. Facilitate technology transfer.
  xi. Identify training opportunities.
  xii. Train the trainers.
  xiii. Establish centers of excellence.
  xiv. Strengthen technical facilities and capacity at regional level for countries to use in risk assessment.
  xv. Investigate possibility of specialized training by regional institutions in risk assessment.

xvi. CNAs and local Technical Advisory Groups need access to and training by regional institutions to be able to interpret risk assessment reports and make informed decisions at the national level.
xvii. Undertake Capacity Building needs assessment for biosafety as first step

- The existing mechanisms / organisations that can provide opportunities for cooperation:
  - Pacific Islands Biotechnology Working Group (PIBWG)
  - SPREP to support info sharing to promote regional cooperation
  - Pacific Environment Information Network (PEIN)
  - University of South Pacific for specialized training.
  - Canadian application for developing BCH.
  - 'Extra-region' countries for training and access to technical facilities

**The participant agreed on the following Future Steps**

i. Identify opportunities for co-financing through linkages with the PIBWG and major international agencies.
ii. Organise a Pacific regional meeting to further discuss and clarify biotechnology knowledge, biosafety and biosecurity.
iii. Take forward areas identified above as recommendations to SPREP and other appropriate organisations (USP, FAO, UNESCO) to facilitate regional cooperation.
iv. Countries to carry forward recommendations within country and to regional meetings, Ministerial meetings, relevant sections of Pacific Plan.
v. PIBWG to undertake capacity analysis of labs in region.

## INTRODUCTION

A Pacific islands sub-regional meeting on "Implementation of National Biosafety Frameworks (NBF) and Regional Cooperation, including the establishment of a Pacific Regional Node of the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH)" was held on 21 – 25 November, 2005 at the headquarters of the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). The meeting covered the following main topics:

i. Sharing experiences and lessons learned in the development of NBFs;
ii. Implementation of NBFs;
iii. Capacity building for effective participation in the BCH, including a Pacific regional node of the BCH to support regional cooperation; and
iv. Areas for regional cooperation.

This was the third Pacific islands sub-regional biosafety meeting organised by the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit for the 14 Pacific island countries* participating in UNEP-GEF biosafety capacity building projects. The previous two meetings were held in November 2003 and November 2004. Reports can be found on the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit webpage (www.unep.ch/biosafety). There were three other biosafety regional meetings during the negotiations period of the Protocol in 1998, 1999, and 2000, prior to commencement of the UNEP-GEF Development of NBFs project. Reports can be obtained from the Regional Coordinator for Pacific islands, Keneti Faulalo (email: keneti.faulalo@unep.ch). The recommendations from these early meetings provided the starting point for identifying 'future steps' in the November 2003 meeting.

Twenty two (22) participants from eleven countries attended the November 2005 meeting. Palau, FSM and Solomon Islands were not able to attend. Each country was invited to nominate a person who will take the lead in the design and planning of Implementation of NBF Project, and a person who is either the BCH Focal Point or a person who will be involved in designing and managing the national component of the BCH. Other participants included Environment Canada who is providing technical assistance for the BCH, the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) who also provided administration support for the meeting, and members of the Pacific Islands Biotechnology Working Group, including those from other regional and international agencies in the region: the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), UNESCO, and University of the South Pacific (USP). The Participants List is attached as Annex 1 to the present report.

* Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu

**OPENING OF THE MEETING**

1. Reverend Siolo Tauati opened the meeting with a prayer.

2. Mr Asterio Takesy, Director of SPREP, extended a warm welcome to the participants. He stated that promoting regional cooperation and partnership in the management of the environment is the primary role of SPREP. In this regard, he was pleased to host the UNEP-GEF biosafety office for Pacific islands within SPREP. He stated that capacity building in biosafety is included in the SPREP Work Programme for 2006 and also in the Framework Memorandum of Understanding between UNEP and SPREP. He then drew attention of the participants to Agenda 21 and the outputs of the Earth Summit in Rio in1992 as the roots for the Convention on Biological Diversity and hence, its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The objectives of the Earth Summit were taken forward at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 and for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), in Mauritius in January 2005. He urged participants therefore to ensure biosafety is addressed within the context of sustainable development. He highlighted SPREP's commitment to work with UNEP and GEF towards the development and implementation of National Biosafety Frameworks.

3. Dr Nizar Mohamed, Regional Coordinator for Asia-Pacific, UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit, thanked SPREP for the cooperation, and support extended by the organization and looked forward to maintaining and strengthening this relationship. He highlighted the importance of information sharing, learning from each other's experiences and regional cooperation in increasing the chances of sustainability through combined efforts. He extended thanks to the Canadian Government for providing technical support in the development of application for establishing national and regional BCHs. He noted that 10 Pacific island countries are now Parties to the Biosafety Protocol and the first region to commit to networking and information sharing through a regional BCH. In so doing, the Pacific islands have taken the lead, especially in terms of regional cooperation.

4. Dr Tu'u'u Ieti Taulealo, CEO Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE), welcomed delegates to Samoa and commended the amount of work achieved to date. He mentioned that Samoa has completed its draft NBF and is now working on a project proposal for implementation. He brought the attention of participants to the global trends showing a rapid increase in the amount of area planted with GMO crops in the past decade. Through globalization, this increase in development and application of modern biotechnology has and will continue to impact on the lives of Pacific island peoples. He explained that there are benefits and risks associated with modern biotechnology, and highlighted the importance of building capacity in the region to enable Pacific island countries to make their own informed decisions about modern biotechnology. He reiterated the importance of regional cooperation in order to pool efforts, share information, and to achieve economy of scale. He was excited about the idea of a regional BCH in the Pacific and thanked Environment Canada for their technical support. He acknowledged SPREP's important role in promoting regional cooperation and thanked the SPREP Director for the support he expressed earlier. He commented that SPREP hosting a regional BCH would strengthen its efforts for fulfilling its mandate. Dr Taulealo concluded by declaring the meeting officially open.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE MEETING

### Introductions and Ground Rules

5. The participants took turns around the table to introduce themselves (List of Participants is attached as Annex 1 to the present report). Dr Mohamed then introduced the importance of setting and observing some grounds for the meeting. The participants agreed on ground rules based on trust, courtesy, respect, and assertiveness.

### Objectives and Work Plan

6. Dr Keneti Faulalo, Regional Coordinator for Pacific islands, UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit, introduced the objectives as in the first paragraph of the introduction section to this report and the work plan for the Workshop.

7. The participants agreed to follow the programme of work as set out in Annex II to the present report. Dr Faulalo explained that, given participation in the BCH was a crucial aspect of implementing NBFs, there were no parallel sessions on the BCH and implementation of NBFs. The two participants from countries were to participate in all sessions.

### Expectations and Concerns

8. Participants were invited to express their expectations and concerns in connection with the outcome of the meeting. Annex III to the present report summarises the comments from the participants, as well as the comments made at the closing session on the last day, assessing whether the expectations and concerns had been met.

## REGIONAL PROGRESS AND STATUS OF DEVELOPMENT OF NBFs

9. Dr Faulalo summarised progress and status in the development of NBFs in the region. As at 20th November 2005, ten (10) Pacific Island Countries (PICs) have ratified the Cartagena Protocol. These are *PNG, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Tonga, Palau, Marshall Island, Niue, Samoa, Nauru and Fiji*. In terms of status of development of NBFs, PICs are at different stages as follows:

   Group A: Countries that have completed draft NBFs and have been endorsed and published on the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit website:
   *Samoa, Tonga, Papua New Guinea (PNG)*

   Group B: Countries that have complete drafting and are either incorporating recommendations from an external advisor into the final draft NBF or are undergoing the endorsement processes:
   *Niue, Vanuatu*

   Group C: Countries that have completed drafting and are ready for external review:
   *Kiribati*

Group D: Countries in Phase 3 (drafting):
*Palau, Cook Islands*
Group E: Countries in Phase 2 (analysis and consultation in preparation for drafting):
*Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Fiji, and Tuvalu*
Group F: Countries in Phase 1 (carrying out surveys):
*Nauru, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)*

**SHARING OF COUNTRY EXPERIENCES**

10. Countries were asked to give 7-10 minutes presentations on their experiences and lessons learned during the different phases of the development of their NBFs. Fiji, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, PNG and Samoa made PowerPoint presentations to the meeting, copies of which were made available on the CD ROM containing the meeting documents, given to all participants at the end of the meeting. The other countries provided verbal reports.

11. The issues raised during discussion, included how different countries handled labeling, public awareness, and risk assessment & risk management. It was noted that for most, if not all, of these issues, a regional approach would be beneficial. For example, pooling technical expertise for risk assessment at the regional level might be the only way some countries can carry out informed national decision-making.

12. The different experiences in reviewing draft NBFs were also discussed, including development of TOR for consultants, the role UNEP-GEF plays in providing extra funds and identification of consultants. It was reinforced that the final decision on a consultant to carry the review was up to the countries. In terms of arrangements, UNEP would require at least four weeks to prepare contracts, and that availability of experts was a real hurdle and therefore very important to plan well ahead.

13. The continuity of capacity was also raised as an important issue for Pacific islands. It was highlighted that wherever possible, maintaining Project Coordinators was very important; recognizing that changes in personnel in NEAs was unavoidable.

14. It was noted that no single approach suited all countries. Each country instead carried out the activities - and customized the toolkit - in ways that suited their own situation, capacities, and needs. In some countries for example, it was more cost effective to bring representative participants to workshops in the capital than trying to hold workshops in lots of provincial areas. Others preferred to go out to outer islands in order to involve more communities. In general, PICs preferred to use local consultants wherever possible. During drafting phase however, some countries used regional or international consultants, while others like PNG and Vanuatu used local consultants.

15. Also raised as an important issue in the country reports was the harmonization of biosafety-related legislations and laws at the national level, especially those dealing with biosafety, biosecurity, and biotechnology. PNG for example, was the only country that

has a biosafety and biotechnology policy, and was developing legislations that address both. Most countries were facing the challenge of harmonizing biosecurity and biosafety. It was noted that SPC was carrying out a project to harmonize biosecurity legislations at the regional level, which was a different approach from the one taken by countries in the development of biosafety systems, whereby the focus is on harmonization of legislations and institutional arrangements, and identifying national priorities and capacities at the national level first, and then identify regional synergies or areas for cooperation, which was one of the objectives of this meeting. The point was made that regional cooperation should be driven from country needs based on gaps in capacity and resources limiting implementation of NBFs at the national strategies, rather than be driven from outside.

## Recapping "What is a NBF?" and country-driven approaches to development.

16. Dr Faulalo introduced the session by observing that country presentations and discussions that followed showed that the knowledge and understanding in the Pacific islands of biosafety and "What is a NBF?" has been exponential when compared to the previous two years.

17. To recap "what is a NBF?" he highlighted how different countries in the Pacific approached the process for development, and customized the toolkit, depending on their country situations, capacities, and needs. He recapped the five common elements of a NBF, including their inter-linkages were explained, namely: (i) a government biosafety policy; (ii) regulatory regime; (iii) a system to handle requests (administrative, risk assessment, management, decision making); (iv) follow-up activities (enforcement, monitoring); and (v) public awareness, education and participation.

18. The importance of a government biosafety policy reflecting national priorities was highlighted. A government biosafety policy need not be a standalone, rather to be developed within the context of other national priorities in areas such as biotechnology, national development, biodiversity, agriculture, fisheries, etc. Examples of biosafety policies were provided from Pacific island countries that have already completed their draft NBFs. In each of these countries, the biosafety policies tended to focus on objectives of national development plans and strategies, and objectives of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAP). In Samoa, the biosafety policy is an attachment to the biodiversity policy. PNG took this a bit further, and in order to meet its needs, its policy cover both biosafety and biotechnology.

19. The regulatory regime was highlighted as a central link for all other components of a NBF. Different examples were provided of approaches and choices made by countries that have completed, or were near completion in the development of their regulatory regimes. Tonga developed a Biosafety Bill 2004, an umbrella legislation that brought together relevant provisions of various legislations such as in health, trade, and food-safety. Samoa developed a Biodiversity Bill under which Biosafety Regulations were being developed. Niue opted to amend its Environment Act to allow development of

Regulations for biosafety, the same approach Kiribati has taken. Countries like Vanuatu, Cook Islands and Palau have opted to develop Regulations for biosafety under their biosecurity legislations.

20. In terms of administrative systems, the examples from different countries highlighted there was no single way of packaging administrative systems. Each country developed their systems based on existing institutional arrangements and systems. The importance of clarity of the decision-making process was highlighted. In many cases, it was not clear if the decision-making body was the Competent National Authority (CNA), the Minister, or Cabinet. For example, in many systems, the CNA makes the decision, to be endorsed by the Minister or Cabinet. The questions many external reviewers have asked was what if a Minister of Cabinet overturn a CNA decision? In these cases, the Minister or Cabinet, would be the decision-maker.

21. A key priority emerging for all PICs was that of public awareness and participation. A crucial aspect of public awareness highlighted by many countries was public education. Without public awareness and education, public participation would not be possible. It was noted that the BCH could play an important role by providing public access to information on GMOs and other aspects of biosafety. For a lot of PICs, public awareness and public education justifies establishment of national BCHs as the BCH hosted by the CBD Secretariat – the central portal - does not provide information beyond obligations of countries under the Protocol.

22. Dr Faulalo concluded by bringing the attention of participants to the now more than 50 draft NBFs posted on the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit website (www.unep.ch/biosafety), as examples of the different approaches taken by countries in the development of NBFs, that fulfill country obligations under the Protocol and meet country needs and priorities.

23. During discussion, a question was raised on whether outside experts could be used in decision-making. The different countries that have completed draft NBFs and those near completion commented on the composition and roles and functions of technical advisory bodies in their systems. In most countries, the draft NBFs could allow for input of technical experts from the region or international. It was however clarified that while most, if not all systems allow for involvement of regional and/or international experts and mechanisms in technical advisory roles, this was different from decision making. No country has involvement of non-national bodies or experts in their Competent National Authorities, i.e., regional mechanisms for example can be called upon for technical advise say in verifying risk assessment, but final decision would always be made at the national level.

24. The issue of harmonization of biosecurity and biosafety at the national level was also discussed extensively. It was thought that harmonization of biosecurity and biosafety was important at the national level, but that it might be difficult to harmonize the different elements of national laws at a regional level, especially with respect to decision-making.

**EVALUATION OF GEF 's SUPPORT TO THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL**

25. Dr Mohamed provided a brief summary of GEF Council decisions influencing the transition from development of NBFs to implementation. He pointed to the decision to carry out an evaluation to guide the development of a new GEF Strategy and future GEF support in biosafety. He presented a brief overview of the resulting evaluation that was carried out by the GEF Office of Monitoring and Evaluation (OME ) during February and March 2005, which critically evaluated the investment and achievements of the GEF NBF Development Project's support to the Cartagena Protocol.

26. He focused on the conclusions and recommendations in the lengthy report that was completed in September 2005 and had already been circulated to countries. He commented that the GEF Council in their November meeting has requested further review of the evaluation report, following which the draft recommendations will become more concrete and will be used to inform elements of a new GEF Strategy. A survey evaluation of the toolkit developed by the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit was also carried out.

27. Of particular interest to Pacific Island countries were the recommendations relating to regional cooperation and capacity building. Dr Mohamed commented that the recommendations were still under review, but in the draft report, regional cooperation has three primary goals: to promote the pooling of resources; harmonization; and flexibility in order to target specific country needs within a region. Dr Mohamed commented that it was likely that the recommendation for more regional activities in implementation would be highlighted in the new GEF Strategy.

28. In terms of capacity building, the draft report highlighted capacity building through regional centres of excellence. This was considered desirable to promote sustainability, but in reality, there were very few around the world, and none in the Pacific islands region. It was noted that with a greater country commitment to co-financing, such centres could be part of regional projects but overall this could be difficult to make happen. Other ways of building capacity within a region was to enhance south-south cooperation and to make efficient use of scarce resources.

29. During discussion, it was pointed out that there was still lack of clarity on how things will evolve, and clarity would not likely emerge until June 2006 when the next GEF Council meeting will be held. It was reiterated that the new GEF Strategy would guide implementation projects, but whatever the modality of operation would be under the new GEF Strategy, there will always be a need to design national implementation projects, using the systematic and participatory approaches such as the Logical Framework Analysis.

30. In terms of centres of excellence, it was noted that some of the centres of excellence being developed might be national labs that can serve the region. For example in Vietnam, one centre was being developed that could help others in region. The PNG

Unitech facilities could serve the Pacific region in the same way. The possible roles of regional organizations was discussed, and to be elaborated in the regional cooperation session later involving the Pacific Islands Biotechnology Working Group.

31. There was discussion on south-south cooperation in the context of Pacific islands. It was explained that an important aspect of south-south cooperation could be in sharing of expertise and experiences that have been built during the development of NBFs. For example, countries PNG is close to Nauru that are about to do their surveys, so they can ask PNG to share their expertise in this. Networking and coming together as a region could help facilitate this kind of cooperation.

**CAPACITY BUILDING FOR EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE BCH**

## Hands-on use of the Central Portal of the BCH

32. Ms Jyoti Mathur-Filip, Task Manager of the BCH Project, UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit, provided a presentation to introduce the BCH. She recapped what he BCH mechanism was; the role of the BCH; benefits and obligations of the Parties on related to the BCH under the Protocol, including the kind of information Parties must make available on the BCH; and how the BCH works.

33. Mr Fred Vogel, Programme Officer, UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit, assisted by Ms Mathur-Filip, presented the training package that has been developed by the UNEP-GEF Project for Capacity Building for Effective Participation in the BCH. This covered the various categories of information that a party to the Protocol must make available to the BCH and can access via the BCH.

34. This was followed by a demonstration and a hands-on computer session on how authorized users could enter and access information on the BCH. The information covered in these sessions were to be made available in a CD ROM provided to participants at the end of the meeting, in particular the 2 Acrobat files called *An Introduction to the BCH* and *Registering Data in the BCH Central Portal*.

## Canadian BCH – A Case Study

35. Mr Marcus Ballinger, Senior Policy Advisor for Environment Canada and Office of Biosafety, presented the National Node of the BCH for Canada, and provided an overview of the Canadian Management Tool that has been developed to assist reporting. He explained that the Canadian system was a hybrid system that uses the BCH management centre for local management of data content and a web service that sends a copy of the data entered to the country's website. He explained that the content management program helps to build the website and could be customized to suit each country's needs.

36. Mr Ballinger demonstrated the various elements and components of the system, including: style sheets; hyperlinks; how to create multiple languages; basic HTML programming; and a general anatomy of a web page or site map.

37. The demonstration was then followed by a hands-on exercise in which Mr Ballinger walked the participants through the management tool to demonstrate how the application could be customized to build national BCHs that meet country specific needs. Notes were provided as a handout to all participants to provide a working knowledge of basic data entry, using HTML. A copy of the management tool software was also provided in CD ROM for participants to take home to continue familiarization with the application.

38. During discussions, the participants commented on the user-friendliness of the application. The importance of presenting country specific information, beyond BCH requirements of the Protocol was discussed, in particular country specific information for purposes of public awareness and education. It was agreed that the application developed by Canada could be customized to suit local languages, terminology and content, allowing countries to present biosafety information in their own ways to meet their specific needs in a national node of the BCH. The resource implications of developing national BCHs were discussed, including how these get built into the MoU for the BCH project.

39. Concerning a regional node, the following issues were raised:

- A Pacific regional node for the BCH could play an important role in ensuring sustainability beyond the 18-month period of the BCH projects;
- The resource implications of the various options for setting up national nodes;
- There was general consensus that a regional node was needed for information sharing and networking;
- Details needed to be worked out on how to link and integrate national nodes with a regional node;
- National nodes of the BCH in the absence of a regional mechanism require technical and IT capacity at the national level, and in most countries this capacity was limited;
- Regional node hosted in a regional organization could address the lack of technical capacity in some countries and could provide technical backstopping;
- A regional node could address lack of capacity at the national level by allowing networking between IT people;
- National level provides more sustainability because government would be more committed;
- Capacity building to focus on national rather than regional level;
- Regional Advisors trained through the UNEP-GEF BCH project available to countries, but only during the lifetime of the BCH project;
- Technical requirements for hosting national BCHs, locally at the national level;
- Some countries do not have local ISPs and webpages hosted in overseas ISPs;
- Hosting of national BCHs within a regional node might reduce national ownership;
- SPREP was recommended by PICs in previous meetings as the regional organisation to host a regional node, and the SPREP director in the opening of the meeting expressed support for a regional node as a mechanism for promoting regional cooperation, but there

was limited clarity on the resource implications and commitment from SPREP on how, and if, they could provide this service for countries;

- The benefits of a regional organisation like SPREP hosting a regional node, include the server behind a firewall, a reliable Internet connection in Samoa compared to most countries, and the website would be made available 24 hours a days 7 days a week;
- Concerns expressed that hosting databases at SPREP could present issues in relation to the ownership of data; and
- There was a need to clarify what roles other mechanisms such as SIDSNET could play.

40. Concerning ownership of data, Mr Ballinger clarified that the new version of the Canadian application eliminates the need to manage a database at the national or regional levels, that all databases would be managed by the CBD Secretariat and a copy of each data sent to the national or regional BCH web pages.

41. In terms of technical requirements, Mr Ballinger explained that the key decisions countries need to make were where to host the website, and where to host the management tool. A benefit of having the website and the management centre posted in one place was that when upgrades would be required, it would only be changed in one place.

42. There was a general consensus that long-term issues and arrangements with SPREP needed to be further explored.

## Overview of UNEP-GEF BCH Project

43. Ms Mathur-Filip provided a presentation on "Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the BCH of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety", and pointed to the sample MoU and the Operational Handbook, that would be made available in the Workshop CD ROM being out together for participants. She summarized the status of the BCH project in the Pacific islands, that with COP-MOP decisions on eligibility, all Pacific island countries as Parties to the CBD were now available. She explained that for the ten (10) Parties to the Cartagena Protocol were automatically eligible and a letter of endorsement needed to be sent by the GEF Focal Points. For the other four (4) countries that were non-Parties to the Protocol but were Parties to the CBD, letters of endorsement needed to be provided from the ministerial level providing political commitment to ratify the Protocol by the end of the projects. So far, five (5) PICs have sent letters of endorsement and were working on developing MoUs.

44. Ms Mathur-Filip explained that to assist countries, the BCH project would provide Regional Advisors that could provide technical assistance at the national level. These Regional Advisors were given training on the BCH and could be available to countries for up to fifteen (15) days during the lifetime of the project. The biographies of the Regional Advisors (RA) already selected could be found on the BCH website www.unep.ch/biosafety/bch.html. More training and selection of new Regional Advisors will be carried out in early 2006.

45. During discussion, it was clarified that issues relating to hosting of websites were currently outside the scope of assistance under RAs. It was clarified that all PICs have been sent a letter of invite to join the project and PICs that have not sent letters of endorsement were encouraged to send them soon.

46. In terms of the total budget for the BCH project, it was clarified that the maximum for each national project was USD$50,000. On top of this, the RAs would be provided and paid for from the global project for up to 15 days. It was also clarified that the funding was for equipment and training only, and that salaries were not covered.

47. The issue of whether countries could use local or regional consultants that were not RAs was also raised. It was explained that in terms of providing specific training within the $50,000 budget, that this was up to each country and should be included in the MoU. In terms of funding local or regional consultants that were not RAs, for specialized training from the global project, it was explained that this was not clear but was an issue recently raised by countries, and the UNEP-GEF BCH project team would explore further this possibility.

48. The issue of whether PICs could request RAs from other regions was raised, and was clarified that the geographic distribution of RAs was done in such a way that would ensure cost efficiency by having RAs within each region focusing on the countries of that region to reduce travel costs. In the context of the Pacific islands, it was recognized that achieving cost-efficiency couldn't always be achieved by using a RA based within the Pacific islands only. A RA based in Mexico for example, could sometimes be more cost efficient to get to the South Pacific via LA than a RA based in North West Pacific. There was however a need to balance this against knowledge and ability to work with cultures of the Pacific islands.

## Joining the BCH Project: Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Handbook

49. Ms Mathur-Philip provided an overview of the Operational Handbook describing the steps in the process for joining the project. She described the various Forms: for identification and nomination of a BCH Task Force; decision on option for participation in the BCH as provided by the CBD Secretariat; national assessment and describe the locally available BCH assets and requirements; detailed costing for all components of the proposed national BCH system; propose a training strategy for your national BCH system; and a strategy on the long-term sustainability for national participation in the BCH.

50. Ms Lydia Eibl-Kamolleh, Fund Management Officer, UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit, explained that the BCH project was an add-on to the UNEP-GEF project for development of NBFs. It has two main components: training and equipment. The training package was web based and was designed as a global tool for regional advisors to use. She explained that a standard MoU has been developed to simplify the reporting requirements for financial accountability, and that this was a legal agreement with UNEP.

51. Ms Eibl-Kamolleh then went through the different Forms in the Operation Handbook and suggested participants to familiarize themselves with these. She explained the MoU approval and signing procedures, the reporting requirements, and funding schedule for the project (75% advance payment upon signature of the MoU and 25% completion payment made upon receipt of a revised BCH strategy and submission and approval of the final financial statement with supporting documents.)

52. The discussion that followed included the options for the best time for using RAs, and the distribution of the total budget into various components (equipment or training) depending on specific country needs.

## Working Groups: Hosting of National BCH WebPages and Canadian Management Tool.

53. The participants broke into three Working Groups to discuss: (i) which of the 4 options provided by the CBD Secretariat they would use, (ii) whether they would use the Canadian management tool, and (iii) where they would host national BCH web pages and management tool. The three Groups were:

    Group 1: Kiribati, Tuvalu, Marshall Islands and Nauru
    Group 2: Fiji, PNG and Vanuatu
    Group 3: Tonga, Niue, Samoa, Cook Islands

54. Group 1 report:
    - General agreement that they would prefer to use option 1 (entering data directly into the central portal over internet), but would also use option 2 (data gets sent to the CBD Secretariat to be entered into the BCH central portal by the Secretariat through the management centre in Montreal, because of the lack of reliability of internet connections;
    - General agreement that they would use the Canadian application;
    - That management tool to be kept on a computer in the office, separate from where the websites would be hosted;
    - In terms of where countries would like to see their national BCH web pages hosted, different countries had different issues as follows:
        - **Tuvalu –** government has own ISP but would prefer a regional organization to host website due to lack of reliability and limited supporting infrastructures
        - **Kiribati** - unsure about who will host, government hosting the web page for government agencies at present and need government input to make a decision
        - **Marshall Islands** - need to consult at capital before making decision, currently host government webpage in an international ISP overseas, and expressed concerns with IT capabilities for hosting within country
        - **Nauru** - prefers a regional organization to host website because of lack of reliability of internet connections
    - The group identified five factors that needed to be taken into consideration: long-

term sustainability, cost, technical experts, technical resources and reliability.

55. Group 2 report:
    - General agreement that they would prefer to use option 1 with option 2 as fallback;
    - In terms of where countries would like to see their national BCH web pages hosted, different countries had different issues as follows:
        - **PNG** - no government ISP and main problem was high cost of maintenance using private ISP
        - **Fiji** - have available technical expertise at the national level, maintenance of system was main concern
        - **Vanuatu** - limited resources, local ISP very expensive, no government service
    - General agreement that they would use the Canadian application, and also opted for the management tool to be kept on a computer in the office, rather than on the server hosting the webpage.

56. Group 3 report:
    - General consensus that capacity issues were a concern and would favour hosting of national webpages together at the regional;
    - All countries supported option 1 with assistance of the Canadian management tool to develop national BCHs;
    - Like the other two groups, prefer to keep management tool on office computer and not on the server hosting the web pages;
    - The costs of hosting the websites at the national level would prohibit long-term sustainability.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF NBFs**

## Designing an Implementation of NBF Project

57. Dr Faulalo opened this session by saying that it was important to keep in mind that the process for designing an implementation project was not a start from scratch process, rather the starting point for designing of national implementation projects was the completed draft NBF from the development phase.

58. He gave a brief recap of the Logical Framework Analysis approach that was introduced to National Project Coordinators in the November 2004 meeting. He explained that the LFA approach allows for a systematic and flexible approach to designing an implementation project, involving participation of as many stakeholders as possible in the process, ensuring ownership. He briefly explained the horizontal and vertical logics involved, and the resulting logframe or matrix that should form the 'skeleton' of the project design.

## Country experience designing an implementation project – the Samoa

## experience

59. To demonstrate the LFA process, Misa Konelio, the NPC for Samoa, and Fiona Ey, the local consultant used by Samoa to assist the process, gave a presentation on their experiences in designing Samoa's implementation project using a LFA approach.

60. Mr Konelio explained that they were in a fairly advanced stage of the process, and it involved several meetings over several months, but that the logframe and proposal, which has been compiled into a Medium Size Proposal (MSP) format, still required further work.

61. Mr Konelio explained that before starting the process, the NEA decided on two things:
    (i) to recruit a local consultant (Ms Fiona Ey) to assist the NPC and NEA in the process, and to compile information into a project proposal; and
    (ii) to select a core technical group of around ten – as a subset of the National Coordinating Committee - that would act as a design team and would be committed to the development and design of an implementation project.

62. The first activity was training on the LFA process given by Dr Faulalo in February 2005 to the design team to prepare them as facilitators in a multi-stakeholder workshop two months later.

63. The design team, with the help of Ms Ey, then took the issues and problems that were raised during the multi-stakeholders workshop and used them to design an implementation project. Ms Ey clustered the issues and problems into clusters of: policy, legislations, institutional arrangements and public awareness and education. The team then carried out several half-day brainstorming sessions on a fortnightly, sometimes monthly basis, depending on availability, in which they applied the LFA by verifying if the clusters were right; whether the issues were in the right clusters; decided on clusters as components for the implementation project; re-phrased the issues into problems; then rearrange the problems into cause and effects – the "Problem Tree"; and then identify from the "Problem Tree" the objectives, outputs and activities for each component of the project; apply horizontal and vertical logics to arrive at a logframe matrix; and incorporate the information in the logframe into a MSP proposal format.

64. Ms Ey summarized the process as very challenging at first and the design team took a while to get a feel of LFA approach, but once the team grasped the LFA concepts, the process acquired momentum and the Problem Tree exercises and the team brainstorming sessions became exciting. Between sessions, Ms Ey worked on the next version of the logframe that the team would then build upon in their next session. Ms Ey, explained that a lesson learned was the importance of perseverance and allowing time to go through the process and to come up with the project design based on the right goal and objectives. From the experience of Samoa, it was necessary to spread out the time for the process because of other commitments by the core group, and in fact taking time helped to gel things together.

65. During discussion, the issue of limited capacity to form a core team in some countries was discussed. The utilization of local and regional consultants in these situations, as Samoa has done, would be very useful. It was clarified that the use of left over funds from the development phase could be used for this purpose.

66. There was discussion on how the five components of a draft NBF gets packaged in an implementation project proposal. It was explained that it was not necessary to have a project design with five different components based on the five common elements of a NBF, that in some project designs, it was possible to incorporate the various components under a single heading, say 'Capacity Building', depending on what the national priorities were, ad what emerge from the Problem Tree analysis, as long as all the five elements of a NBF were covered. Some countries in the world have workable biosafety policies, so their implementation projects emphasize the other four elements. Dr Mohamed gave the example of Indonesia, where very little work on risk assessment and management was required as this country already had field trials for the last 10 years, so the emphasis was on public participation. All the five elements were in the project design, but the funding proposal places focus in one particular area.

67. The timeframe was discussed and it was clarified that four years would be the expected timeframe for projects where legislation was expected to be established and legal and technical instruments set up.

## A Logical Framework Analysis Exercise

68. Dr Faulalo recapped the concepts underlying the LFA approach, and introduced the Problem Tree exercise. Each country was asked to identify 4 main problems they face in implementing their NBFs, and to write each problem in a separate piece of paper. One person from each country then presented their key problems to the rest of the group and pinned them on the wall.

69. This was followed by a brainstorming session in which the problems were rearranged into the following clusters that were identified:
    i. Governance,
    ii. Public Awareness/Public Participation, and
    iii. Capacity Building.

70. The issue of sustainability was identified as an over-arching priority issue that could formulate a goal for the whole project.

71. Each cluster was then rearranged into 'cause' and 'effects' and within each cluster (main branch), the problems were re-grouped into identifiable general headings (sub-branches). For example, under Governance, there were problems relating to policy, legislations, coordination and harmonization). Under Capacity Building, were institutional capacity and human resource capacity.

72. The participants were then asked to view the mirror image of the Problem Tree to turn the problems into goals and objectives. The public awareness and participation cluster was used to demonstrate the process, and the following were identified:
    - Goal: "To increase biosafety knowledge, awareness and participation by promoting public education at all levels"
    - Objectives:
        - To increase knowledge on biosafety issues.
        - To promote and enhance public awareness on biosafety.
        - To develop capacity on biosafety.

73. Due to limited time, it was not be possible to go through the horizontal logic to identify, indicators, means of verification, risks and constraints, and management of risks, for each objective. From the problems raised in the problem tree however, it was possible to see what the likely outcomes and likely activities for public awareness and participation could be:
    - Results/Outcomes:
        - A well informed public on biosafety
        - Better understanding about biosafety at all levels
        - Less ignorance on biosafety
    - Activities:
        - Design extensive public awareness strategies
        - Public awareness projects targeting all stakeholders including policy makers
        - Develop public education materials
        - Integrate biosafety education into the curriculum.

**REGIONAL COOPERATION IN BIOSAFETY**

## Human Resource Capacity for Risk Assessment

74. To set the scene for the session on regional cooperation, the participants were asked to go back into the three Groups of: 1 – Kiribati, Tuvalu, Nauru, Marshall Islands; 2 – Fiji, Vanuatu, PNG; 3 – Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, to carry out the brainstorming on the problem of lack of human resources for risk assessment under the Capacity Building cluster of the Problem Tree, and in addition, to identify at what level the responsibilities should lie, national or regional. The Groups arrived at the following combined list, with level where responsibilities should lie in brackets:
    i. Write proposals to obtain resources for training *(national)*
    ii. Train local technical people in risk assessment *(national)*
    iii. Identify training opportunities *(both national and regional)*
    iv. Identify regional agency mechanisms for support and to conduct risk assessment *(national)*
    v. Train the trainers *(both national and regional)*
    vi. Provide incentives for trained people to stay on *(national)*
    vii. Nationals to collaborate with regional and international institutions *(national)*
    viii. Establish centres of excellence *(both national and regional)*

ix. Develop appropriate technical facilities at national level based on needs analysis *(national)*
x. Strengthen technical facilities and capacity at regional level for countries to use in risk assessment *(regional)*
xi. Investigate possibility of specialized training by regional institutions in risk assessment *(both national and regional)*
xii. CNAs and local Technical Advisory Groups need access to and training by regional institutions to be able to interpret risk assessment reports and make informed decisions *(national)*
xiii. Training for CNAs on completeness of information in applications *(national)*
xiv. Undertake Capacity Building needs assessment for biosafety as first step *(both national and regional)*
xv. Make use of local knowledge and experts within country *(national)*

## Biosafety and Biotechnology - Pacific Islands Biotechnology Working Group

75. Dr Mary Taylor, Regional Germplasm Adviser, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), on behalf of the Pacific Islands Biotechnology Working Group (PIBWG), provided a presentation on the objectives and activities of the PIBWG. The aim was to identify possible areas for synergies in promoting regional cooperation, areas where collaboration could be made, and where activities of the PIBWG could add-value to implementation of NBFs at both national and regional levels.

76. Dr Taylor explained the composition of the PIBWG, involving countries (PNG, FSM, Guam, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji) and regional and international organizations (SPC, PIFS, USP, UNESCO, FAO-SAPA, UNEP). She added that the Group was an open-ended and flexible in membership. She invited the National Project Coordinators for the NBF projects or the Biosafety Protocol Focal Points to consider joining the PIBWG.

77. She briefed the participants on the initial meeting of the PIBWG in Nadi, in February 2005, sponsored by the EU Centre for Technical and Rural Cooperation (CTA), to facilitate dialogue on biotechnology issues among national, regional and international partners - the ultimate aim being to reach a consensus as to what was required to realize and maximize the benefits from biotechnology use in the Pacific islands. The presentations and discussions at the Nadi meeting found:

- That there was a general lack of awareness of the benefits of biotechnology, particularly in relation to food security and income generation;
- That there was a lack of knowledge of the biotechnology capacity in the region;
- There was poor collaboration between agencies involved in biosafety and biotechnology;
- Collaboration between countries involved with biotechnology was poor;
- Current capacity has an agricultural bias and was mostly limited to low-level technology; and
- It was noted that biotechnology also included conventional breeding techniques (e.g. mushroom culture, hydroponics)

78. In terms of existing capacity:
    - Regional laboratories have tissue culture and DNA-based technical capacity.
    - PNG has significant capacity at the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) that includes tissue culture and labs for molecular marking work.
    - SPC has a regional Germplasm Centre and is carrying out research into seed storage, cryo-preservation and new crops.
    - A shared USP-IAS facility has a DNA lab that is used for virus indexing and is being applied to biocontrol of taro beetle and fruit fly, and a bio-prospecting facility that is mainly being applied to marine resources.
    - The USP School of Agriculture in Samoa hosts a Regional Germplasm Centre (RGC) and is doing virus indexing, which was previously done outside the region.
    - In Guam, sequencing of molecular structure of a coconut vyroid is being carried out along with mushroom culture and tissue culture for banana cultivars.
    - A commercial lab in Tonga is producing taro for growers and canna lilies for export with tissue culture.

79. Capacity varies significantly between countries and there are also significant differences between the North and South Pacific, with greater use of biotechnology in the North Pacific where transgenics for papaya is under consideration. PNG in particular has tissue culture in many agricultural institutions and the capacity for molecular based technology and modern biotechnology.

80. The PIBWG agreed on the need to improve recognition of the role biotechnology plays in sustainable development in the Pacific. To address this, the Working Group issued a statement called the **Nadi Statement**. (Attached as Annex IV to the present report.)

81. To conclude, Dr Taylor provided some recommendations, noting that a lot of the issues and problems raised during the Problem Tree exercise in the earlier sessions, and the resulting objectives for implementation of NBFs projects, clearly identified areas where the PIBWG could add-value, and where synergies and collaboration could be made:
    - In the area of regional cooperation
        - Establishing the PIBWG as an ongoing and active group meets the first objective of regional cooperation.
        - The PIBWG's next step is to set up an online register or database of human and institutional capacity - a virtual *Who's Who of the Pacific* in relation to biotechnology.
        - The PIBWG agreed to produce a case study report to be circulated amongst agencies directly or indirectly involved with biotechnology to cover 9 case studies looking at different levels of biotechnology that have been used in the Pacific region. This could contribute to meeting the objective of raising awareness of what biotechnology covers and what is being done in region.
    - In the policy area
        - The PIBWG promote the embedment of biotechnology in the larger framework of policy within the Pacific region, such as the Pacific Plan.
    - In capacity building
        - Need to focus capacity building at the country-level, according to specific

country needs.
    - Working regionally through centres of excellence can assist to build capacity within country.
    - Identifying institutions with capacity
    - Identify more sustainable funding to build capacity in relation to biotechnology.
    - Demonstrate the economic benefits of transferring biotechnology to new users, as a basis to generate pilot projects.
    - Explore the possibility of a trust fund to maintain a longer- term basis to support capacity building.
    - Resourcing scholarships and training attachments, for example, UNESCO support provided a Tuvauan and Fijian attendance at training sessions in biotechnology in Thailand. In future years, 3 month intensive training attachments will be provided annually.
    - There was a need to look at ways of up scaling new technologies to have greater impact.
- In public awareness
    - The PIBWG target various publications, radio, TV, video, school competitions, educational curricula.
    - In Fiji, work is underway to provide information on biotechnology for the school curriculum already. The emphasis being on the message to be accurate and focused.
    - Contact with the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Projects at this meeting is part of facilitating greater public awareness.
    - The PIBWG can assist with the provision of information at a regional and global level about what were happening, resources, etc.

82. Mr Morton Backmann then provided a brief presentation of UNESCO's mandate and programmes in the Pacific and how they relate and contribute to PIBWG objectives. He brought to the attention of participants, a funding opportunity that would provide for 3-month intensive training attachments as discussed under capacity building, and support for the establishment of an online science practitioners register that NBF capacity building activities could tap into.

83. During discussion, the issues raised included the challenge of developing public awareness outreach materials, how to deal with intellectual property copyright (IPR), the focus of the PIBWG currently being on agricultural crops with little application to marine ecosystems, a need for linkages at the national level between NBFs and NBSAP, the misperception that biotechnology equals genetic engineering, and access to risk assessment expertise.

84. In terms of outreach material, the regional organizations in the Pacific currently have no outreach materials in biosafety. Dr Faulalo undertook to facilitate availability of outreach materials from other countries that could be used by PICs, for example outreach material by the Sri Lanka project that Dr Mohamed recommended.

85. Concerning the misperception that biotechnology equals genetic engineering, examples

were given of other biotechnology applications that contribute to sustainable livelihood of Pacific islands people such as, bioprospecting, tissue culture, production of biofuels, etc. It was agreed that the PIBWG could play an important role in facilitating access to technical expertise in the area of risk assessment.

## Information Sharing and the SPREP Work Programme

86. Dr Jaap (Iapi) Jasperse, Editor and Publications Officer (EPO), SPREP, spoke about information sharing as a core element of SPREP activities and an important element of regional cooperation. The SPREP (sprep@sprep.org) website contains massive amounts of information which, with more time and resources, could be made more up to date and user friendly. The website was online a very high percentage of the time and has reliability plus a good bandwidth for information streaming at a relatively high rate.

87. Dr Jasperse outlined the core activities of his position and pointed out that the website was only part of his job. SPREP was currently employing a consultant to work on adding new elements to the website in relation to the Year of Action Against Waste and the Roundtable for Nature Conservation. It was envisaged that this consultant will work with SPREP staff to enable staff to update areas of the website under their responsibilities, using specially developed software. He explained that commercially available software such as DreamWeaver or Contribute would require licenses.

88. He highlighted the challenges faced in providing essential elements for the website in a timely fashion. When updating depends on a single staff member for content, there are problems with staff turnover and time away servicing countries, so a team approach to updating and editing of pages was being adopted. This would ensure that more than one individual would be trained and that there would be sufficient documentation available.

89. By way of example, the website of UNDESA (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs) for SIDSNet (Small Islands Developing States Network) is hosted at SPREP, and accessible outside SPREP with external agencies responsible for updating pages. The dependency on individuals was highlighted, especially when in this case they might be volunteers, and it was beyond SPREP's capacity to keep a site up to date.

90. Regarding the possible use for SPREP as a clearinghouse for sharing and dissemination of biosafety information from different PICs, Dr Jasperse stated that there were resource limitations of personnel and time that would need to be considered.

91. Advantages of SPREP hosting included, traffic speed and lower charges as it is a big "pipeline"; the SPREP website is reliable and information can be sent relatively fast.

92. Dr Jasperse added that SPREP Information Technology department was not keen to accept too many additions to the SPREP website without financial arrangements being made to cover resourcing issues, particularly monthly traffic charges that could increase significantly for an effective site.

93. Dr Jasperse suggested some kind of "mirroring", as an alternative to hosting, so that if the main server goes off air, pages could automatically be searched at the mirror site and the end user would not know there was an IT problem. This would in effect be acting as a back-up if the individual nation's pages were lost or unavailable.

94. Dr Jasperse explained that if SPREP were to host a regional node, it was necessary to consider who would develop and update the pages, as well as what resources would be required. He explained that if we could clearly identify the requirements and needs, we would be able to determine better the resources that would be needed and seek funding accordingly. He concluded that often people come up with nice ideas and describe in generic terms but don't provide enough detail to bring these ideas to fruition, so concrete ideas and dialogue about - what - who - the content – were needed.

95. The presentation was followed by extensive discussion around the issues relating to SPREP as the regional organization to host a regional node of the BCH. The key points were:

- Some participants raised concern that their recommendation from the November 2004 meeting, favouring SPREP to host a regional node appeared not to have progressed.
- It was brought the attention of the participants that the BCH was now featured in the Annual Work Programme of SPREP, and incorporated into the Work Programme of the Framework MoU that was signed between UNEP and SPREP mid-2005. This issue will be further explored with SPREP.
- It was reiterated that there was a need to be very specific and realistic about exactly what was proposed with ongoing hosting and what capacities would be required for delivering information to users as well.
- In terms of coordination, hosting national nodes or a regional node of the BCH within SPREP, would have the added value of biosafety information being made available in the same place as, and could be integrated with, biodiversity and other environmental information.
- It was explained that the model of national users updating their own information using the Canadian management tool via the Internet would not currently work well with SPREP due to technical limitations and resource implications for the organization.
- It was reiterated that with the Canadian application, SPREP would not be managing a database, that the database would be managed by the CBD Secretariat in Montreal, and that only copies of the information gets sent automatically via WebCrawler to the national and/or regional nodes, hence the system will update the national or regional BCHs automatically.
- There was a need to further clarify the content and resource issues with SPREP.
- At the same time, alternative options for hosting a regional node, which might include the hosting of national WebPages, will be explored.

## AREAS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION IN BIOSAFETY

96. The brainstorming session on areas for regional cooperation in biosafety revolved around two questions:
    (i) What are the areas for potential regional cooperation?
    (ii) What are the existing mechanisms / organisations that can provide opportunities for cooperation?

97. What are the **areas for potential regional cooperation**?
    - Access to technical experts - need for regional technical advisory body to assist countries without capacity and as required to supplement local expertise.
    - Sharing of information - e.g. interactive training, CDs, capacity building, implementation of NBF case studies, including BCH requirements, notices of regional meetings, location of field release of GMO where applicable, beyond Pacific region.
    - Sharing of local expertise.
    - South-south cooperation.
    - Sharing technical manuals and guidelines where possible.
    - Share public education materials - regional video in particular.
    - Legislation via BCH.
    - Biotechnology information / updates from regional organisations - and other countries (best format: multiple modes, internet, newsletters, video).
    - Develop MoUs between regional organisations - meeting with all relevant agencies proposed.
    - Training - opportunities for people from other countries to attend national training sessions - sharing of training resources.
    - Access to and sharing of facilities: equipment, labs - knowing where services are available.
    - Facilitate technology transfer.
    - Include list of regional activities from the LFA exercise under “Capacity Building” (paragraph 74).

98. What are the **existing mechanisms / organisations that can provide opportunities for cooperation**?
    - Pacific Islands Biotechnology Working Group (PIBWG)
    - SPREP to support info sharing to promote regional cooperation
    - Pacific Environment Information Network (PEIN)
    - University of South Pacific for specialized training.
    - Canadian application for developing BCH.
    - 'Extra-region' countries for training and access to technical facilities

## FUTURE STEPS

99. In terms of next and future steps, the participants agreed on the following:
    i. Identify opportunities for co-financing through linkages with the PIBWG and major international agencies.
    ii. Organise a Pacific regional meeting to further discuss and clarify biotechnology knowledge, biosafety and biosecurity.
    iii. Take forward areas identified above as recommendations to SPREP and other appropriate organisations (USP, FAO, UNESCO) to facilitate regional cooperation.
    iv. Countries to carry forward recommendations within country and to regional meetings, Ministerial meetings, relevant sections of Pacific Plan.
    v. Circulate draft-meeting report for comments before finalizing.
    vi. PIBWG to undertake capacity analysis of labs in region as priority action

100. To kick start linkages between NBF projects and activities of the PIBWG, participants were invited to provide some comments on a Term of Reference being developed for a consultancy to carry out a regional survey and review of biotechnology-related policies.

**CLOSING SESSION**

101. The participants revisited the list of their expectations and concerns generated in the first day of the workshop. The results tabulated as Annex 3.

102. Mr Barnabas Wilmott, Assistant Secretary, Wildlife Enforcement, Department of Environment & Conservation, Papua New Guinea, spoke on behalf of participants. He thanked UNEP-GEF biosafety team for providing assistance to the workshop and Marcus Ballinger and the Canadian team for their work in developing the Managment Tool for developing a national BCH. He acknowledged SPREP and thanked every one for sharing their experiences. He stated that different countries were at different stages of development of NBFs and implementation, so sharing experiences was important. He thought that taking the experiences back to country would help others learn as well. He concluded by saying that keeping in contact with each other would foster more regional cooperation.

103. Dr Faulalo also conveyed thanks to SPREP for the partnership and in providing the logistics for hosting the meeting. He thanked the participants for their invaluable contributions during the meeting. He also thanked the technical support provided by Marcus Ballinger and Mary Taylor from the PIBWG. He concluded by saying that he was impressed with the efforts of countries, the quality of the discussions and the improved level of understanding of biotechnology, biosafety, and biosecurity issues. He wished everyone a safe trip back home.

104. Mr Misa Konelio closed the meeting with a prayer.

# ANNEX 1

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## ANNEX 2

## Draft Agenda & Work Programme

| Day / Time | |
|---|---|
| **DAY 1, 21st November** | |
| 8:30 – 9:00 | Registration |
| 9.00 – 9:45 | Opening ceremony:<br>• Prayer – Rev Siolo Tauati<br>• Welcoming Speech – Asterio Takesy, Director, SPREP<br>• Keynote – Nizar Mohamed, UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit<br>• Opening Speech & to officially open – Tuuu Ieti Taulealo, CEO, MNRE |
| 9:45 – 10:00<br>15 min | ***Introduction to the workshop*** |
| 10.00 – 10.20 | Coffee Break |
| 10.20-10.35<br>15 min | Introduction of participants |
| 10.35-10.45<br>10 min | Ground rules |
| 10.45-11.00<br>15 min | **Expectations and concerns for the workshop** |
| 11.00– 11.10<br>30 min | Regional Progress and Status of Development of NBFs |
| 11.10 – 12.30<br>1 hr 20 min | SHARING EXPERIENCES<br>• Country presentations |
| **12.30 – 1.45** | *Lunch* |
| **1.45– 2.15**<br>30 min | SHARING EXPERIENCES<br>• Country presentations cont'd & |
| 2.15-3.00<br>45 min | What is a NBF? |
| 3.00 – 3.20 | ***Coffee Break*** |
| 15.20 – 16.05<br>45 min | Introduction to the BCH |
| **4.05– 5.20**<br>1 hr 15 min | Hands-on Case Study on using the Central Portal of the BCH |
| 17.20 – 17.30<br>10 min | **Daily Evaluation** |
| DAY 2, November 22nd | |
| 9:00 – 9:30<br>30 min. | **Learning review: Discussion on the previous days presentations** |
| 9:30 – 9.45<br>15 min | Synthesis of Country experiences |

| | |
|---|---|
| 9.45 – 10.15<br>30 min | Recap recommendations from previous Pacific regional meetings |
| 10.15 – 10.30<br>15 min | Overview of GEF Evaluation and Draft Elements of a new GEF Strategy - implications to national implementation of NBFs. |
| 10.30-10.50 | ***Coffee Break*** |
| 10.50 – 11.35<br>45 min | IMPLEMENTATION OF NBFs: Recap and Re-introduce LFA |
| 11.35 – 12.05<br>30 min | **IMPLEMENTATION OF NBFs: National experience on planning national implementation project** |
| 12.05 – 2.00 | ***Lunch*** |
| 2.00 – 3.30<br>1 hr 30 min | Demonstration and Playing with the Regional Node |
| 3.30 – 3.50 | ***Coffee Break*** |
| 3.50 – 5.20<br>1 hr 30 min. | Joining the BCH project, sample MOU and the Operational Handbook |
| 5.20 – 5.30<br>10 min | Daily Evaluation |

**DAY 3, November 23rd**

| | |
|---|---|
| 9:00 – 9:30<br>30 min. | **Learning review: Discussion on the previous days presentations** |
| 9:30 – 10:30 | **Establishment of Regional node and/or National BCH** |
| 10.30 – 10.50 | Coffee Break |
| 10:50 - 1.20pm<br>2 hrs 30 min | **Establishment of Regional node and/or National BCH (cont'd)** |
| **AFTERNOON** | **OFF** |

**DAY 4, November 24th**

| | |
|---|---|
| 9:00 – 9:30<br>30 min. | **Learning review: Discussion on the previous days presentations** |
| 9.30– 10.30<br>2 hr | LFA – Implementation of NBFs |
| *10.30 – 10.50* | ***Coffee Break*** |
| 10.50 – 12.30<br>1hr 40min | LFA – Implementation of NBFs |
| 12.30 – 2.00 | Lunch |
| 2:00 – 3:30<br>**1 hr 30 min** | **REGIONAL COOPERATION IN IMPLEMENTATION:**<br>• **Pacific Islands Biotechnology Working (SPC, UNESCO, USP)**<br>• **SPREP activities in clearing houses**<br>• **Biosafety in SPREP Work Programme** |
| 3.30 – 3.50 | Coffee Break |

| | |
|---|---|
| 3:50 – 5:00<br>**1 hr 10 mins** | **REGIONAL COOPERATION IN BIOSAFETY**<br>• **Identify areas for cooperation** |
| 5.00– 5.10<br>10 min | Daily Evaluation |

**DAY 5, November 25th**

| | |
|---|---|
| 9:00 – 9:30<br>30 min. | **Learning review**<br>**Discussion on the previous days presentations** |
| 9.30 – 10.30<br>1 hour | Examples of national BCHs – developed during the week |
| 10.30 – 10.50 | Coffee Break |
| 10:50 – 12:30<br>1 hr 40 min | **REGIONAL COOPERATION IN BIOSAFETY**<br>• **Break-Out Groups – Discuss areas for regional cooperation** |
| 12.30 – 2.00 | Lunch |
| 2.00 – 2:30<br>**30 min** | **REGIONAL COOPERATION IN IMPLEMENTATION:**<br>• **Report back from Break-Out Groups** |
| 2:30 – 3:30<br>1 hr | Next Steps:<br>• Establishment of the regional node of the BCH<br>• Regional Implementation Project |
| 3.30 – 3.50 | Coffee Break |
| 3.50 – 4.10<br>20 min | Response to “Expectations & Concerns” |
| **4:10 – 4:30**<br>20 min | Workshop evaluation by participants on standard forms |
| **4:30 – 5:00** | Closure of the workshop |

**ANNEX 3**

**EXPECTATIONS AND CONCERNS**

| Expectations | | Concerns | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Idea of timeframe for implementation | ☎☎☎ | How to harmonise organisations at national level in terms of biosecurity and biosafety | ☎ |
| Learning experiences from other countries re implementation | ☎☎☎ | Translation of technical language of projects into public awareness activities | **0** |
| Ideas for inclusion of public participation and awareness | ☎☎☎ | Whether draft NBF is sufficient to meet needs of country and fulfil obligations under the Protocol | ☎☎ |
| How to access BCH project | ☎☎☎ | How do we access roster of experts for risk assessment in implementation | **0** |
| Better understanding of linkages between biosecurity and biosafety | ☎ | Lack of synergies with other clearing houses | ☎☎☎ |
| Better understanding of needs of the region in sharing and managing biosafety information | ☎☎☎ | Is there sufficient time for countries to complete their NBFs | ☎☎☎ |
| Learn more about scope of implementation projects and how we use that to promote regional cooperation | ☎☎ | GEF Timeframe between completion and implementation | ☎☎ |
| Better understanding of BCH and access to project | ☎☎☎ | | |
| Better understanding of risk assessment at regional level to inform decisions at national level | ☎ | | |
| Better understanding of available technical capacity to support implementation of NBFs | ☎ | | |
| Preparations for implementation - what's required | ☎☎ | | |
| How to link different clearing houses in the region | ☎☎ | | |

**Note:**
**0 = not addressed;**
**☎ to ☎☎☎ reflect how well these issues were addressed as recorded at Closing Session**

## ANNEX IV

# Statement of the participants at the Pacific Islands Biotechnology Working Group meeting Nadi, Fiji, 14-17 February 2005

The Working Group agreed on the need to improve recognition of the role biotechnology plays in sustainable development in the Pacific. To address this, the Working Group issued the following statement:

**We, the participants of the Pacific Islands Biotechnology Working Group meeting:**

**Endorse** the role of science and technology in contributing to sustainable development of the Pacific region, and encourage the governments of the region to acknowledge this in the Pacific Plan

**Acknowledge** that biotechnology is an integral part of science and technology, and accept a broad interpretation of the definition of biotechnology as stated in the text of the Convention on Biological Diversity:

> "Any technological application that uses biological systems, living organisms or derivatives thereof, to make or modify products and processes for specific use."

**Agree** with the role of biotechnology for sustainable development as stated in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Earth Summit, 1992), Agenda 21, Chapter 16:

> "Biotechnology promises to make a significant contribution in enabling the development of, for example, better health care, enhanced food security, improved supplies of potable water, more efficient industrial development processes for transforming raw materials, support for sustainable methods of afforestation and reforestation, and detoxification of hazardous wastes. It offers new opportunities for global partnerships."

**Recognize** the need for capacity building and public awareness in science and technology, and **encourage** Pacific Island governments to strengthen science and technology education at all levels.

**Commit** to follow up the work initiated in the Nadi meeting by establishing the Pacific Islands Biotechnology Working Group as an independent, open-ended and flexible body, and agree to:

- Serve as focal point for regional, inter-regional and international cooperation on biotechnology and related sciences

- Be available as an advisory body to ensure effective use of the technology and donor funds available to the region

- Establish an on-line register (database) of human and institutional biotechnology capacity in the Pacific Islands, supported by a moderated electronic communication network to disseminate news and events.

**Commit** to promote innovative mechanisms for sustaining and further developing technical, institutional and human capacity in biotechnology, and agree to:

- Promote biotechnology as an essential element in Pacific Islands sustainable development – closely linked with biodiversity conservation, traditional agriculture, food and nutritional security

- Promote biotechnology as an essential element in economic growth through the effective transfer and utilization of biotechnological innovations for the development of products, markets and increased trade activities

- Actively increase public awareness on biotechnology through appropriate activities such as the publication of articles, video production, electronic communication, and participatory community outreach programmes, acknowledging the diversity of Pacific island languages

- Specifically prepare an open-ended catalogue / “case study book” showcasing the positive contributions of biotechnology towards Pacific Islands sustainable development