

## Questionnaire on resources and expertise available in countries for the exchange of information with the Biosafety Clearing House of the Cartagena Protocol

### Summary of results

#### Introduction

The Questionnaire was prepared by the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Team in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity with the aim to evaluate the state of access and use of the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH) of the Cartagena Protocol. It was sent, along with an explanatory note, to ICCP, Cartagena Protocol, BCH and CBD Focal Points and other relevant officials of 196 countries worldwide. For information purposes, the same documents were also sent, when relevant, to the 113 National Executing Agencies involved in the UNEP-GEF Project on Development of National Biosafety Frameworks.

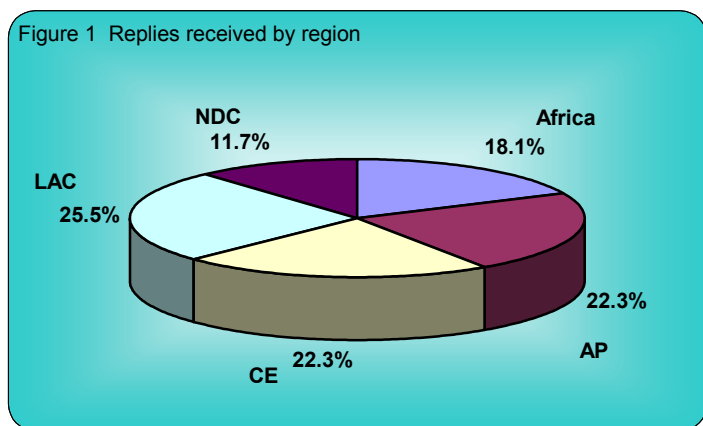
The instructions in the explanatory note explicitly requested that the person/s filling in the questionnaire should be the one responsible for entering / registering data on the Biosafety Clearing House.

#### Respondents

As of 1 July 2003, the questionnaire was filled in by 94 persons from 82 countries.

Figure 1 show the percentage of replies by the region\* .

58.1% of respondents reported to be officially nominated BCH focal points. 88.3% of respondents are familiar with the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, 55.4% of them have been involved in ICCP (Intergovernmental Committee on the Cartagena Protocol) and 76.1% are familiar with the BCH.



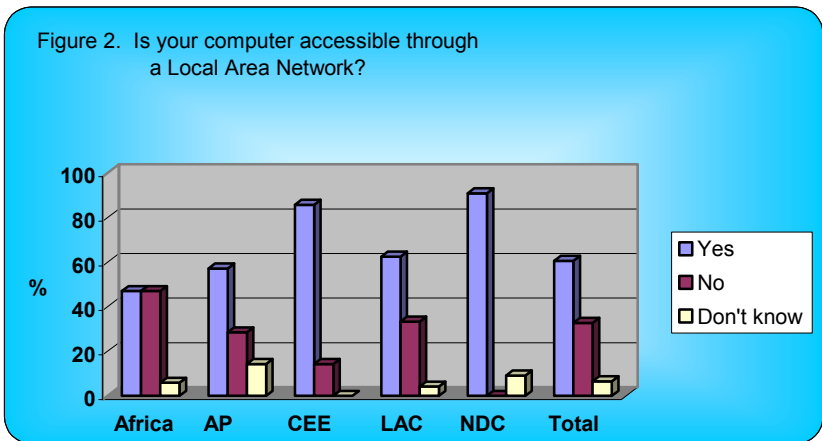
\* Hereinafter AP stands for «Asia and Pacific», CEE - «Central and Eastern Europe», LAC - «Latin America and the Caribbean», NDC - «Not Developing Countries».

## Workstation

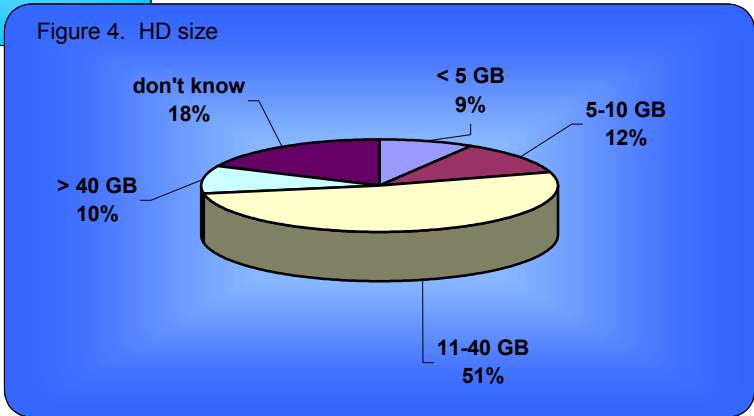
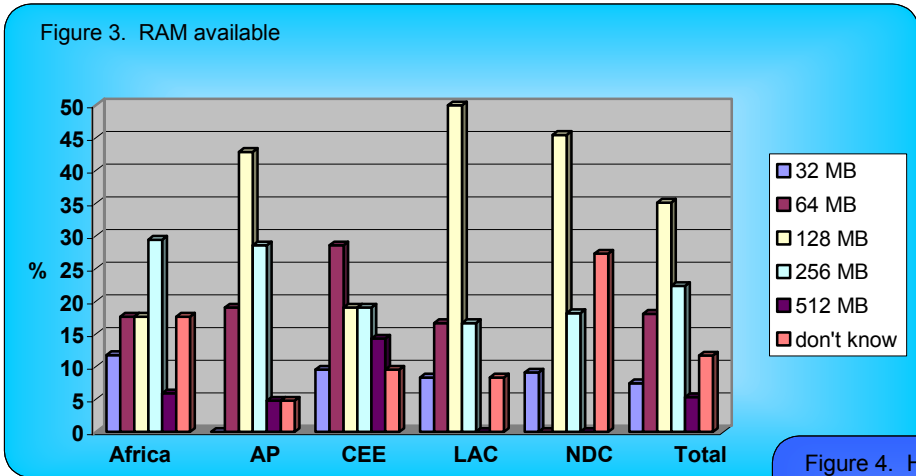
Majority of respondents (96.8%) use their computer workstations in the office, some of them (3.2%) work both in the office and at home. While computers are normally used by one person in NDC (100%) and CEE (90.5%), many respondents in the other regions share their computers with a group of 2-5 colleagues: Africa (70.6% shared computers), AP (47.6%), LAC (33.4%). Computers are usually password protected (81.9%) and offices are locked or guarded outside working hours (84%).

The accessibility of computers through a local area network (LAN) varies between the regions, from 90.9% in NDC to 47.1% in Africa (See Figure 2).

97.9% of respondents have a PC with Windows as the operating system, 2.1% are not aware of the type of a computer and an operating system used. The majority of computers have Pentium III (30.9%) or Pentium IV (53.2%) processors.



About 60% of computers have at least 128 MB of RAM (random access memory) and more than 10 GB of storage space available at their hard disks (see Figures 3 and 4).



**Software**

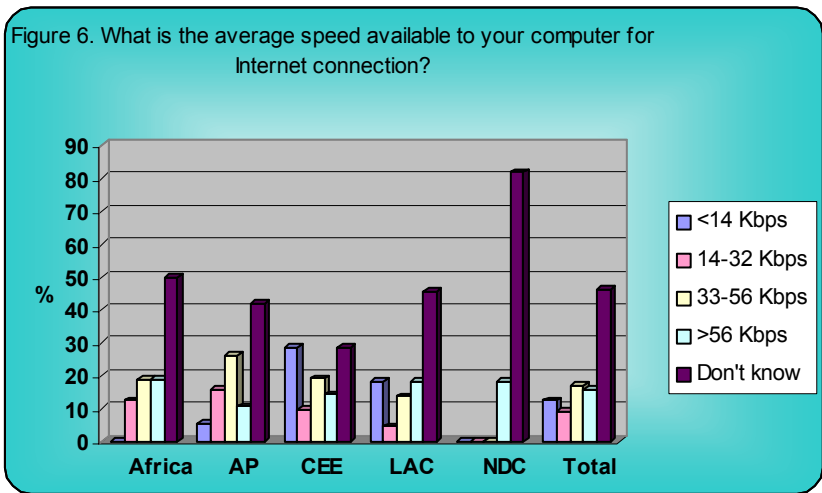
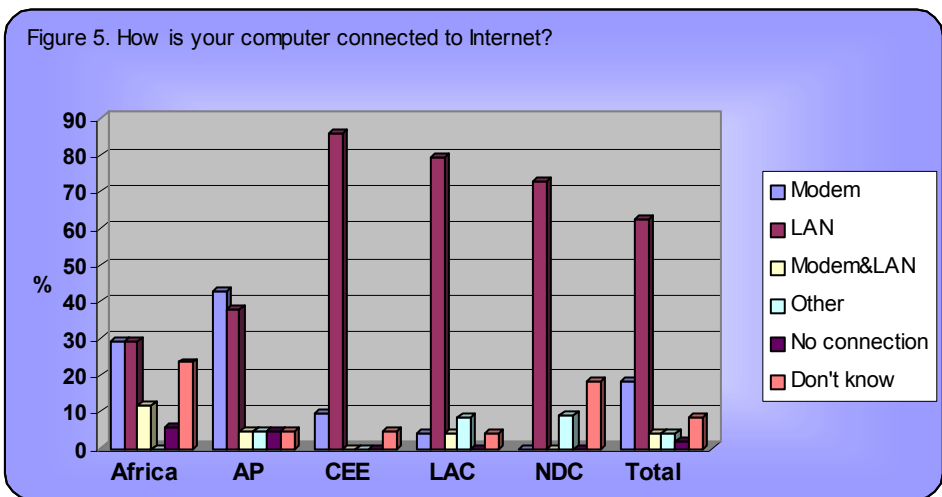
Almost all the respondents (93.6%) use either Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator as Internet browsers, 3.2% of respondents have not installed any browsers due to unavailability of Internet connection.

93.5% of respondents have various e-mail applications, with MS Outlook being most commonly used. Other e-mail applications mentioned are Eudora, Netscape Messenger, Lotus Notes, Pegasus, Foxmail, The Bat!, Webmail and GroupWise.

The majority of respondents (>95%) reported to have a word processor (MS Word, WordPerfect, Star Office), spreadsheet (MS Excel, Lotus 123, Star Office), database (MS Access, FoxPro, SQL, Oracle Developer, Star Office), antivirus (Norton Antivirus, Antiviral Toolkit Pro, AVP, Dr.Web, F-prot, Mc Afee, Sophos, Vet XP Antivirus), file compression utility (Win Zip, Win Rar, Power Archiver, PKZIP, PowerZip, ECW) and Acrobat Reader. Other less common software includes: FTP (42.7%) or Telnet (34.8%) applications, image reader (69.7%) and desktop publisher (39.1%).

**Internet connection**

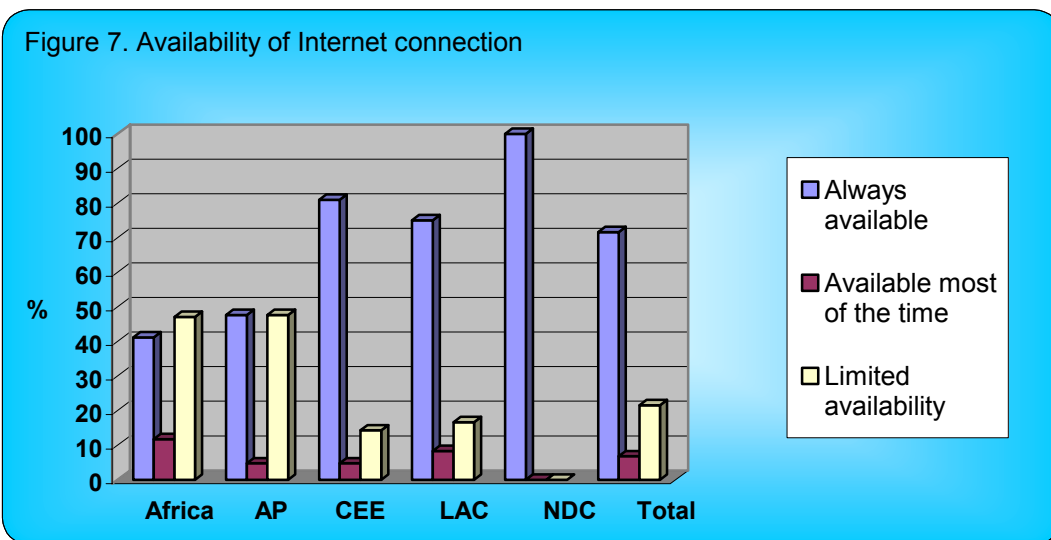
Most computers are connected to the Internet through LAN (62.4%) with the highest percentage in CEE (85.7%) and the lowest in Africa (29.4%). Although modem use is low as a global percentage (18.3%), some regions have reported higher values: Asia and Pacific (42.9%) and Africa (29.4%).



Internet connection maximum and average speeds are variable and many “don’t know “ answers have been reported (46.1%). Nearly half of respondents reported a maximum speed of more than 56 Kbps (45.6%), with a smaller group between 33 Kbps and 56 Kbps (14.4%), and only a few people with < 14 Kbps (2.2%). The majority of respondents have an Internet connection average speed of at

least 14 Kbps, with the exception of CEE countries, about one third of which have reported an average speed of less than 14 Kbps (See Figure 6).

Internet reliability (globally at 71.6%) varies amongst the regions. The lowest availability of 24h/7d Internet connection is in Asia and Pacific (47.6%) and Africa (47.1%), and the highest is in NDC (100%) and CEE (81.0%).



In case of Internet connection failure or computer malfunctioning 84.4% of respondents are able to seek assistance of a system administrator or a help desk. At the same time, only 53.3% of computers are protected by a firewall globally and this percentage is even lower in Africa (23.5%) and Asia and Pacific (33.3%).

### **E-mail**

Almost all respondents have an e-mail account (95.7%) usually owned by single users (88.6%).

16.1% of e-mail accounts are managed by agencies, where the respondents work, 31% by external providers, the rest of respondents (52.9%) are not aware of the type of an e-mail provider. Less than a half of e-mail providers limit the amount of messages and/or attachments respondents may receive and send them warning messages if an inbox is full.

The majority of the respondents do not know the maximum size of attachment they are able to receive or send by e-mail. However, some respondents are aware that they cannot receive (11.8%) or send (28.1%) attachments bigger than 2 MB.

### **Data storage and Biosafety Database**

More than half of the respondents are familiar with data management or database software (53.8%), 34.5% of them designed a database while 27.3% inserted data into biosafety databases.

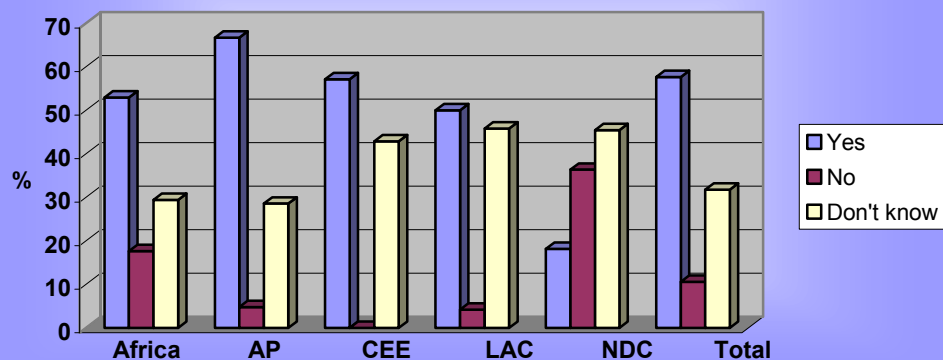
41.9% of the respondents are familiar with various GMO and biosafety related databases, although this percentage is lower in Africa (17.6%) and Asia and Pacific (23.8%). The GMO databases mentioned by respondents include:

- Agbios - essential biosafety;
- Agris Database;
- UNIDO database BINAS;
- Central and Eastern Europe website on Biosafety;
- Databases "Cloning: Past, Present and the Exciting Future", "Induced mutant resource", "Royal Society Science Brief: GM animals", "Transgenic Animals", "Use of Genetically Modified Animals";
- ICGEB Biosafety Database;
- Joint Research Centre Ispra European Commission database;
- OECD database BioTrac;
- Austrian database Gentechnikregister;
- FAO database RedBio;
- BIOBIN;
- USDA Database;
- Pilot BCH.

76.1% of respondents reported the intention of their countries to set up a national biosafety database, very often as an activity under UNEP-GEF project on the development of national biosafety framework.

A third of the respondents have indicated that there are GMO databases existing in their country, half of which are available on the Internet. The majority of respondents from countries with a national GMO database in place are aware of existing procedures to make information available to the BCH (56.7%) and a significant group are also aware of existing protocols for interoperability of national biosafety database with the BCH (42.9%). 79.5% of these respondents have reported that their countries plan to make biosafety information available to the international community by making parts of existing national databases available or interoperable with the BCH.

Figure 8. Do you know whether your country plans to use the central BCH to store their data?



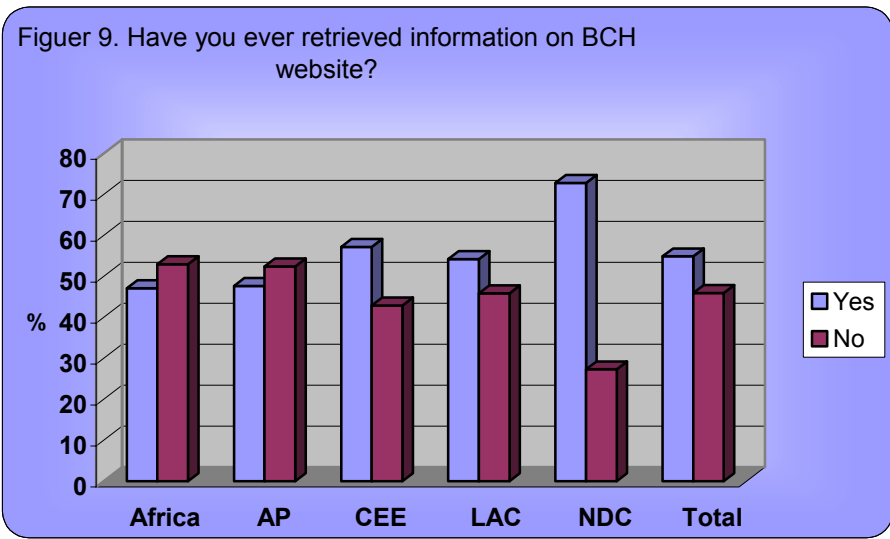
The majority of respondents have indicated that their countries plan to use the central BCH database located at the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to store their biosafety data (57.6%) while 31.8% are not aware of such plans. It

should be noted that only 18.2% of respondents from NDC plan to use the central BCH (See Figure 8).

**Biosafety Clearing House**

The majority of respondents reported that their government has already identified one or more persons responsible for the exchange of information through the BCH (60.9%) and officially communicated this information to the Secretariat of CBD (55.4%).

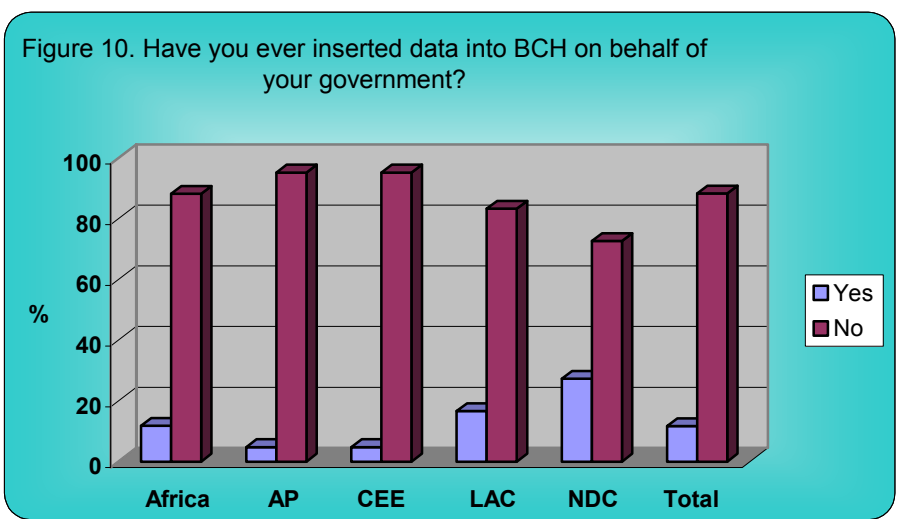
54.8% of the respondents have browsed through the BCH website (see Figure 9), found the information easy to retrieve (80.4%) and have not experienced any problems (73.5%).



found the information easy to retrieve (80.4%) and have not experienced any problems (73.5%).

However, less than a half of the respondents (44.6%) knew of a new version on the BCH released on 1 February 2003.

Only a small number of the respondents (11.7%) have inserted data into the BCH on behalf of their government, in CEE and AP this percentage is even smaller (4.8%).



44% and 32.2% of the respondents have contacted or been contacted by the CBD Secretariat and their government respectively for the reasons concerning the Pilot Phase BCH.

**Needs for assistance as identified by countries**

The majority of respondents (71.3%) have indicated the kind of assistance they would like to receive in order to improve their use of the BCH. These include:

- Hardware (25.4%);
- Software (17.9%);
- Better Internet connection (10.4%);
- Technical support (17.9%);
- Training in information management (50.7%);
- Training in use of the BCH (61.2%);
- Financial support (19.4%);
- Provision of information on the BCH (20.9%).