

## INFORMATION PAPER

### “UNEP-GEF PROJECT ON DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL BIOSAFETY FRAMEWORKS”

The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted on 29 January 2000 a supplementary agreement to the Convention, known as the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB). The Protocol seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. It establishes an advance informed agreement (AIA) procedure for ensuring that countries are provided with the information necessary to make informed decisions before agreeing to the import of such organisms into their territory. The Protocol contains reference to a precautionary approach and reaffirms the precaution language in Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

The UNEP-GEF global project on the “Development of National Biosafety Frameworks” started in June 2001. Using a country-driven process, the global project has been designed to help up to 100 participating countries to set up their national framework for the management of living modified organisms (LMOs), allowing them to meet the requirements of the Cartagena Protocol.

For each country, the process of developing their national biosafety framework would consist of four phases: setting up the required project management structures, gathering of baseline information, analysis of that information in consultation with stakeholders, and preparation of the draft national biosafety frameworks (NBF). Whilst allowing for country specific situations, needs, and priorities, each NBF will consist of five common elements:

1. Biosafety Policy
2. Regulatory regime
3. System to handle requests (administrative, risk assessment & management, decision making)
4. Follow up actions (monitoring, inspections and enforcement)
5. Public Awareness and Participation

#### **Eligibility criteria**

In order to participate in the Project, a country had to meet the following eligibility criteria:

- ✓ Must be a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity and be eligible for GEF support;
- ✓ Must be a signatory to Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, or intend to ratify the Protocol not later than completion of their UNEP-GEF project;
- ✓ Must not have received assistance from other GEF funded biosafety projects (e.g. the UNEP-GEF Pilot Project);

- ✓ Must have the National GEF Focal Point formally express the country's interest in participating in the Project.

A deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2003 was set by the Project Steering Committee for further countries' participation in the project.

### Capacity building for development of NBF

Under the UNEP-GEF Biosafety project, the development of the NBF is country-driven and each NBF is developed through a process of "learning by doing". The UNEP-GEF biosafety team provides each country with support and advice as needed; these include:

- **A modular toolkit** – this provides a practical "how-to" guide for countries to develop their NBF. The toolkit is being prepared in a flexible manner tailored to meet the diverse needs of different countries, and allows countries to select those tools and ideas that are most useful to them. Three modules of the toolkit have been distributed so far, i.e. Phase 0 (Starting up), Phase 1 (Taking stock) and Phase 2 (Analysis and consultation).
- **Regional Awareness Raising Workshops** – these have been designed to promote regional and sub-regional collaboration and exchange of experience on issues of relevance to NBFs. The first round of regional workshops in support of this aim focussed on improving understanding of the issues involved in developing national biosafety frameworks amongst countries in the regions. These workshops have been carried out in cooperation with the CBD Secretariat, which has held back-to-back workshops on the Biosafety Clearing House. 293 national representatives from 139 countries attended the four regional from January to May 2002
- **Subregional Training workshops** – these are based on the results of the first round of regional workshops. The UNEP-GEF Biosafety project is doing two further rounds of training workshops. These workshops started in November 2002 and are focussing on building capacity in participating countries on key issues related to the development of National Biosafety Frameworks such as risk assessment and management, public participation, as well as administrative and regulatory systems.
- The results of the regional workshops indicated that countries preferred sub-regional meetings that promote networking within regions, and between sub-regions. In this way, the project will be able to meet the special needs of specific groups, as well as supporting more participants from participating countries. The training workshops were carried out in six sub-regional groupings.

73 representatives from 18 African countries attended the sub regional workshop for Anglophone Africa held in Windhoek, Namibia, in November 2002. 59 representatives from 16 Latin American countries attended the sub regional workshop for Latin America held in Mexico City, Mexico, in December 2002. 82 representatives from 21 Asian countries attended the sub regional workshop for Asia held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in January 2003. 103 representatives from 28 Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Ocean countries attended the sub regional workshop for SIDS in Nadi, Fiji in February 2003. 90 representatives from 20 African

countries attended the sub regional workshop for Francophone Africa held in Dakar, Senegal in April 2003. 83 representatives from 24 CEECCA countries attended the sub regional workshop for Central & Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia in May 2003 in Vilnius, Lithuania.

### **Sub-regional Cooperation**

One of the project's aims is to improve cooperation at a sub-regional and regional level and the workshops have been one useful tool in allowing space and time for countries to come together, share experiences and discuss with potential partners about opportunities for cooperation in practical ways. As countries have progressed in developing their NBFs, more and more countries are looking to cooperation as one solution to a relative lack of resources at the national level. The project has started to support more subregional cooperation initiatives in CEE region and will work on bringing more tools and support to other regions. The new Information Officer will also help to set up list servers and networks in sub-regions. In response to the needs of the Pacific Island Communities, a native Pacific Islander has been appointed as Assistant Regional Coordinator, based in SPREP, Samoa and a similar position is being created to cover support to Francophone countries of Africa. Further activities will be developed to respond to the need for this important activity.

### **Dissemination of information**

The project team is working to encourage countries to disseminate their relevant information through the BCH. The project also recognises the important role of information dissemination in biosafety capacity building and is carrying out a number of activities to promote this aim:

- The project website provides information on the current status of the project and on important relevant documents and links on: <http://www.unep.ch/biosafety>
- A mailing list server provides project updates for all relevant contacts and enables the dissemination of relevant information to stakeholders.
- A Newsletter is produced for the provision of project related information. The first Newsletter was mailed out in December 2001, the second in May 2002 and the third in August 2003.
- Reports of Regional workshop have been circulated to all participants in the workshops. A synthesis of the results of the regional workshops has been distributed and is available on the project web site.
- Brochures on the project as well as on capacity building activities in biosafety have also been widely distributed.

### **Cooperation with other Biosafety Capacity Building Activities**

The UNEP-GEF project has established contacts with bilateral donors and other international stakeholders on biosafety capacity building activities to ensure an easy flow of information, and early identification of opportunities for collaboration. A matrix on capacity building in biosafety was developed from the Cuba "Action Plan" for capacity building. Active

cooperation continues with a number of UN agencies such as World Bank, UNDP, UNIDO, WHO, FAO, ICGEB, CBD and IGOs such as IUCN. The project has been involving the representatives of Industry through the Global Industry Coalition and the NGOs interested in the issue through Third World Network. This cooperation has also led to the active support by the Department for International Development (UK) to produce a study on experiences in 16 countries and an analysis of tools for public participation in Biosafety.

### **Project Management and Guidance**

The Project Steering Committee, which consists of representatives of the ICCP Bureau, the CBD, as well as other UN agencies involved in Biosafety, provides the project with guidance and advice. This committee met for the second time in January 2003 and approved the business plan and the current annual implementation plan for the project.

### **BCH Capacity Building Project**

As a result of the great interest of countries in making full use and access of the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH), UNEP has collaborated with CBD Secretariat to develop a GEF project to meet these needs. Firstly, we set out to discover current usage of the BCH, and with CBD produced a questionnaire on the BCH, sent out to all CBD Parties. The results are available on the website at: [http://www.unep.ch/biosafety/BCH\\_Questionnaire\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.unep.ch/biosafety/BCH_Questionnaire_Summary.pdf)

Based on all the information from countries and the results of the questionnaire, a GEF project was developed, in collaboration with CBD Secretariat, to train countries in the use and access of the BCH and provide appropriate hardware and software. A copy of this project brief is to be found at the following location:

[http://gefweb.org/Documents/Work\\_Programs/wp\\_Jul03/Project\\_Brief8.pdf](http://gefweb.org/Documents/Work_Programs/wp_Jul03/Project_Brief8.pdf)

The project will involve training based on the BCH toolkit and will involve production and dissemination of an interactive tutorial and software to assist countries in developing a national database and sending data to the BCH. Training of trainers will be carried out in regional locations prior to national training being conducted with the aid of these trainers and regional consultants. The project will be discussed at the GEF Council Meeting in November 2003. Only GEF eligible countries that are Parties to the CPB and are not involved in an NBF Implementation Project will be able to join.

### **National Projects**

As of August 2003, 120 countries are participating in the project, and 112 of these have already prepared their draft National Project Document (NPD). 110 national projects have been approved and 95 have already started under the guidance of the relevant regional coordinators.

Africa	Asia - Pacific	Central and Eastern Europe	Latin America and Caribbean
1. Algeria	1. Bangladesh	1. Albania	1. Antigua and Barbuda
2. Angola	2. Bhutan	2. Armenia	2. Argentina
3. Benin	3. Cambodia	3. Belarus	3. Bahamas
4. Botswana	4. Cook Islands	4. Croatia	4. Barbados
5. Burkina Faso	5. Fiji	5. Czech Republic	5. Belize
6. Burundi	6. Indonesia	6. Estonia	6. Chile
7. Cape Verde	7. Iran, Islamic Republic of	7. Georgia	7. Costa Rica
8. Central African Republic	8. Jordan	8. Latvia	8. Dominica
9. Comoros	9. Kazakhstan	9. Lithuania	9. Dominican Republic
10. Congo	10. Kiribati	10. Macedonia, The former Yugoslav Republic of	10. Ecuador
11. Congo, Democratic Republic of	11. Korea, Democratic People's Republic of	11. Malta	11. El Salvador
12. Côte d'Ivoire	12. Korea, Republic of	12. Republic of Moldova	12. Grenada
13. Djibouti	13. Kyrgyzstan	13. Romania	13. Guatemala
14. Eritrea	14. Lao PDR	14. Serbia and Montenegro	14. Guyana
15. Gabon	15. Lebanon	15. Slovakia	15. Haiti
16. Gambia	16. Maldives	16. Slovenia	16. Honduras
17. Ghana	17. Marshall Islands, Republic of	17. Turkey	17. Jamaica
18. Guinea	18. Micronesia, Federated States of	18. Ukraine	18. Nicaragua
19. Guinea Bissau	19. Mongolia		19. Panama
20. Ethiopia	20. Myanmar		20. Paraguay
21. Lesotho	21. Nauru		21. Peru
22. Liberia	22. Nepal		22. St. Kitts and Nevis
23. Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	23. Niue		23. St. Lucia
24. Madagascar	24. Palau		24. St. Vincent and the Grenadines
25. Mali	25. Papua New Guinea		25. Suriname
26. Morocco	26. Philippines		26. Trinidad and Tobago
27. Mozambique	27. Samoa		27. Uruguay
28. Niger	28. Solomon Islands		28. Venezuela
29. Nigeria	29. Sri Lanka		
30. Rwanda	30. Syrian Arab Republic		
31. Senegal	31. Tajikistan		
32. Seychelles	32. Tonga		
33. Sierra Leone	33. Vanuatu		
34. South Africa	34. Viet Nam		
35. Sudan	35. Yemen		
36. Swaziland			
37. Tanzania, United Republic of			
38. Togo			
39. Zimbabwe			

**For further information, please contact:**

Christopher Briggs, Development Project Manager  
 UNEP-GEF Project on Development of National Biosafety Frameworks  
 International Environment House  
 15, Chemin des Anemones, 1219 Geneva, Switzerland  
 e-mail: [chris.briggs@unep.ch](mailto:chris.briggs@unep.ch)

Tel. (+41) (0) 22 917 8410  
 Fax: (+41) (0) 22 917 8070  
<http://www.unep.ch/biosafety/>