

COP/MOP 6 HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 1 OCTOBER 2012

The sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol (COP/MOP 6) opened in Hyderabad, India on Monday 1 October. In morning plenary, delegates heard opening statements and reports on the Compliance Committee, financial mechanism and resources, cooperation with other organizations, conventions and initiatives and administration and budgetary matters. In the afternoon, delegates convened in two working groups (WGs).

WG I addressed: compliance; handling, transport, packaging and identification (HTPI) of living modified organisms (LMOs); notification requirements; and liability and redress. WG II addressed the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH), capacity building and risk assessment and risk management.

OPENING PLENARY

Opening the session, COP/MOP 5 President Masamichi Saigo, Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries, welcomed delegates and invited Jayanthi Natarajan, Indian Minister of Environment and Forests, to take over the COP/MOP 6 Presidency. COP/MOP 6 President Natarajan stressed the need to find a balance between health, technology and the environment, and urged parties to ratify the Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress.

CBD Executive Secretary Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias announced new parties to the Protocol and ratifications of the Supplementary Protocol, outlined intersessional efforts and hailed the 90 percent submission rate for the second national reports. Bakary Kante, UNEP, highlighted the UNEP-GEF projects for building capacity for BCH participation and implementation of the Protocol.

Ekkadu Srinivasan Lakshmi Narasimhan, Governor of Andhra Pradesh State, said that the survival of humans should not come at the cost of other life forms, stressing the need to raise awareness to ensure the wise use of biotechnology. Tishyarakshit Chatterjee, Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests, called on delegates to find consensus on risk assessment and risk management, socio-economic considerations and other issues on the COP/MOP 6 agenda.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: COP/MOP 6 Chair Shri Farooqui, Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests, explained that the COP10 Bureau serves as the COP/MOP Bureau, with Mexico replacing Argentina, which is not a Protocol Party. Delegates elected Kauna Betty Schroder (Namibia) as the meeting's rapporteur and adopted the meeting's agenda (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/1) and organization of work (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/1/Add.1/Rev.1) moving agenda item 16 on socio-economic considerations from WG II to WG I.

Delegates then elected Bureau Members Ines Verleye (Belgium) and Spencer Thomas (Grenada) as chairs of WG I and WG II, respectively.

REPORTS: Delegates heard reports on: the Compliance Committee (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/2 and Add.1); financial mechanism and resources (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/4); cooperation with other organizations, conventions and initiatives (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/5); and the Protocol's administration and budgetary matters and the proposed budget and work programme for the biennium 2013-2014 (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/5/6 and 6/Add.1). The Global Environment Facility (GEF) reported that GEF funding during the first half of the reporting period focused on assisting parties with preparing their second national reports.

Delegates established a budget contact group, chaired by Conrad Hunte (Antigua and Barbuda).

STATEMENTS: Grenada, on behalf of the LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN GROUP (GRULAC), underscored the need for capacity building; urged countries to sign the Supplementary Protocol; and called on the GEF to fulfill its mandate. URUGUAY emphasized the value of the BCH for ensuring effective participation in key mechanisms of the Protocol. Serbia, for CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (CEE), stressed the importance of cooperation with other organizations and conventions, especially with regard to information sharing. Denmark, for the European Union and its 27 member states and Croatia (the EU), prioritized work on capacity building; and handling, transport, and use of LMOs. Liberia, for the AFRICAN GROUP, emphasized challenges associated with risk assessment and risk management.

JAPAN reported that his government's donations to the CBD's intersessional work have been used for capacity building workshops and the development of e-learning training courses on biosafety. SAUDI ARABIA called for prioritizing regional capacity building programmes on risk assessment and risk management. KENYA highlighted the national implementation of the Biosafety Protocol in her country, including regulations on contained use, labeling, environmental release, and import, export and transit.

The US expressed its support for the Cartagena Protocol and called on parties to implement it in a manner that is the least restrictive on trade. BOLIVIA stressed the importance of coordination with the World Trade Organization (WTO) saying it would present a proposal in that regard.

Pointing to common objectives with the CBD, especially regarding sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, the WTO reported on ongoing consideration of the CBD's application for observer status. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported on the implementation of its Memorandum of Understanding with the CBD to harmonize information sharing on biosafety aimed at improving their respective databases on LMOs.



WORKING GROUP I

COMPLIANCE: Delegates considered the report of the Compliance Committee (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/2). COLOMBIA requested financial resources for parties experiencing difficulties implementing the Protocol. Compliance Committee Chair Jürg Bally (Switzerland) suggested that such support be included in the budget. The EU expressed concern over gaps in compliance, including developing national biosafety frameworks and providing information to the BCH. UGANDA highlighted the importance of developing public awareness programmes on safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs.

HTPI: LMOs destined for contained use or for intentional introduction into the environment: Many delegates welcomed a synthesis of information contained in the second national reports (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/8). MALAYSIA, PARAGUAY, COLOMBIA and MEXICO said they already have legal requirements in place and opposed changes to documentation requirements.

BOLIVIA proposed ensuring implementation by requiring the incorporation of specific documentation and to review the issue at COP/MOP 8. LIBERIA supported a provision for countries who wish to prepare standalone documentation requirements, noting the particularities of issues regarding LMOs. COLOMBIA and the PHILIPPINES supported the use of commercial invoices for HTPI. NEW ZEALAND noted that most parties do not require standalone documentation but can do so if they see fit. PERU recommended future reviews to obtain information through other means in order to assess whether national frameworks are working.

HTPI Standards: Delegates considered UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/9 and INF/7. BOLIVIA and INDIA preferred deleting references to labeling. PARAGUAY, URUGUAY, MEXICO, COLOMBIA, NIGERIA and NEW ZEALAND opposed reference to the UN Model Regulations on Transport of Dangerous Goods. PARAGUAY, the EU and BRAZIL opposed adding new codes for LMOs into the existing coding systems of the World Customs Organization without more analysis. BRAZIL, NIGERIA and the EU also opposed adding reference to the Cartagena Protocol under standards of the WTO SPS Committee. PERU proposed text to promote the use of LMO databases prepared by the BCH.

Delegates agreed to a Chair's proposal to develop a single draft decision on HTPI.

NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS: Delegates considered UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/10. INDIA noted that only half the parties had established notification requirements for exporters and supported addressing gaps. The EU suggested that future review should only take place if parties demonstrate a substantial and documented need. BOLIVIA proposed linking the review provision to information from importing parties. MEXICO recommended exploring the use of parameters to assess if the existing rules and measures meet the objectives of the Protocol based on the experience of parties who have notification requirements.

LIABILITY AND REDRESS: The Secretariat presented document UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/11, noting that three countries have ratified the Supplementary Protocol with 40 required for its entry into force. COLOMBIA, MEXICO and BOLIVIA requested a guide explaining the Supplementary Protocol. Parties reported on national efforts to achieve ratification of the Supplementary Protocol. The EU stressed capacity building and establishing national priorities. UGANDA emphasized awareness raising at the national level. The Public Research and Regulation Initiative (PRRI) emphasized capacity building to help countries understand liability and redress.

WORKING GROUP II

BCH: Delegates considered the report UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/3 on the BCH. Many parties supported continued GEF support for capacity building through extending the second phase of the UNEP-GEF capacity building support for the BCH (UNEP-GEF BCH II) project for a third phase. The EU called for progress on: inclusion of risk assessment summaries;

continuation of online fora and training; and evaluating the BCH before extending the UNEP-GEF BCH II project. NORWAY cautioned against budgetary implications of activities proposed in the draft decision. ECUADOR, PARAGUAY and BRAZIL emphasized the importance of financial resources. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA expressed willingness to further support regional capacity building workshops. JAPAN, MEXICO and the PHILIPPINES suggested improving cost effective mechanisms such as online fora.

COLOMBIA urged adjustments to encourage BCH use by all sectors, including the private sector. NEW ZEALAND requested investigating the data types being used. BRAZIL said parties, not the Secretariat, should decide what data to include in the BCH. The PHILIPPINES said the BCH should offer more training modules.

UNEP reported on the UNEP-GEF BCH II project, which aims to improve online training, increase access to data and the number of information sources. PRRI urged strengthening the sharing of scientific information through the BCH.

CAPACITY BUILDING: Status of capacity-building activities: Delegates considered UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/7/ and 7/Add.1 on the status of capacity building and the comprehensive review of the capacity building action plan. Many parties supported regional capacity building initiatives while UGANDA and BRAZIL called for support to address national capacity needs. The EU with others called for continued coordination between donors and recipient parties. JAPAN, NEW ZEALAND and MEXICO called for continuous development of skills and advancement of e-learning. The PHILIPPINES suggested different levels of online training modules.

BOLIVIA called for shifting responsibility for capacity building on LMOs to parties and stakeholders responsible for their development. TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO said training of trainers should focus less on volume of information for trainers and include aspects of training approaches.

Roster of Biosafety Experts: Delegates considered UNEP/CBD/BS/COP MOP/6/7/Add.2. BOLIVIA suggested deleting a call for contributions to the voluntary fund to operationalize the roster. JAPAN, CUBA, ECUADOR, NIGER and TOGO supported adopting a revised form for nominating experts. PARAGUAY said new nominations should not replace the current roster. MALAYSIA urged nominating an expert on socio-economic issues. INDIA said funds should primarily support parties' activities.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT: Delegates considered UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/13/ on risk assessment and risk management and the revised guidance on risk assessment of LMOs (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/13/ Add.1). Helmut Gaugitsch (Austria), Chair of the *Ad hoc* Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on risk assessment and risk management, outlined the AHTEG's final report (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/INF/10) noting that the AHTEG's recommendations include extending the its mandate beyond COP/MOP 6 and adopting, implementing and providing feedback on the revised guidance. BOLIVIA emphasized the precautionary approach. PARAGUAY said the guidance requires consideration of national strategies and trials by parties.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Fears that COP/MOP 6 could be somewhat anticlimactic without the tense late night negotiations on liability and redress that had marked the last COP/MOPs were dissipated as delegates were quick to point to the expected highlights of COP/MOP 6. Many echoed the Executive Secretary's remark that the guidance on risk assessment was probably "the most beautiful pearl" to be crafted during the meeting, alluding to Hyderabad's famous tradition in producing fine jewelry.

Others were cautiously optimistic that COP/MOP 6 could become a turning point in the discussion on socio-economic considerations, noting that the inter-sessional work on this issue has yielded a sound basis from which to take pragmatic first steps.