



Press Brief Protocol on Biosafety

Risk Assessment and Risk Management

Background

Parties to the Protocol are required to make decisions on the import of Living Modified Organisms (LMOs) for intentional introduction into the environment in accordance with scientifically sound risk assessments. They are also required to adopt measures for managing risks identified during risk assessments.

What has been done?

At its fourth meeting, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Biosafety Protocol (COP-MOP) established an Open-ended Online Expert Forum and an Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Risk Assessment and Risk Management to develop guidance on specific aspects of risk assessment. At that meeting, the Parties also requested the Executive Secretary to develop training courses to enable countries to gain hands-on experience in preparing and evaluating risk assessment reports.

At their fifth meeting, the Parties welcomed the Guidance and decided to extend the work of the online forum and AHTEG for further revision, testing and elaboration of further guidance on new specific topics of risk assessment. The document entitled "Guidance on Risk Assessment of LMOs", includes: Part I: "Roadmap for Risk Assessment of LMOs," that elaborates the technical and scientific process of environmental risk assessment in accordance with Annex III to the Protocol and provides background material and links to relevant references. It also includes Part II: "Specific Types of LMOs and Traits" that provides guidance on the risk assessment of LMOs with stacked genes or traits, living modified plants with improved tolerance to abiotic stress, living modified trees and living modified mosquitoes. Part III contains guidance on the "Monitoring of Living Modified Organisms released into the environment".

At their fifth meetings, the Parties also welcomed the development of the "Training Manual on Risk Assessment of Living Modified Organisms" and requested the Executive Secretary to develop an interactive learning tool based on the manual. The Parties also requested the Executive Secretary to convene further training courses.

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At the sixth meeting, Parties commended the progress made on the resulting “Guidance on Risk Assessment of LMOs”. They also noted, among other things, that the Guidance would be tested nationally and regionally for further improvement in actual cases of risk assessment and in the context of the Protocol. In response to a request made at the sixth meeting, the Secretariat has also developed tools as well as gathered and analyzed feedback in line with testing of the Guidance.

In addition, at the sixth meeting, the Parties also extended the online forum and established a new AHTEG to develop and achieve, among other things, a package that aligns the Guidance (e.g. the Roadmap) with a training manual “Risk Assessment of Living Modified Organisms” in a coherent and complementary manner. The Parties also requested the Executive Secretary to follow up on training by gathering additional feedback from Parties on the practicality, usefulness and utility of the Guidance and training manual through online discussions or other means. The Parties also acknowledged the concept of an e-training tool based on the revised training manual.

What news to expect in Pyeongchang?

At its seventh meeting, it is anticipated that the COP-MOP might take a decision to:

- Endorse the Guidance and support for its use and application in actual cases of risk assessment and as a tool for capacity-building activities in risk assessment
- Establish a mechanism for updating the Guidance to have an updated version of the Guidance by the ninth meeting of the COP-MOP
- Endorse the package that aligns the Guidance and Manual as a online tool for, for example, capacity building in risk assessment
- Extend the online forum and AHTEG
- Request the Secretariat to further convene capacity-building activities and to develop an interactive learning tool based on the aligned package on risk assessment

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