



**Statement by Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema,
Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity
on the occasion of the opening of the
Eleventh meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House
under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety
Online, 1 December 2020**

Distinguished colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the eleventh meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House.

I would like to start by acknowledging that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose enormous global challenges affecting all of us, both at the professional and personal levels. As you know, this meeting was originally to have been held in July, back-to-back with the third meeting of the Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

While we continue our efforts to find means to convene the meetings of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and the Post-2020 Working Group, I am very pleased that this meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee can proceed.

I know that many of you will be connecting early in the morning or late at night due to time zone differences, and I thank you all for adapting your schedules and doing your best to actively participate.

As you know, the Biosafety Clearing-House is at the core of the Cartagena Protocol. The Protocol provides that Parties can take their own decisions on living modified organisms, but they must share these decisions and associated risk assessments with the world so that other countries can also take informed decisions. This balance between concerns for biodiversity and sovereign rights is what makes the Cartagena Protocol a successful agreement. In this light, the Biosafety Clearing-House is clearly a necessity in our work, not a luxury.

This balance is also an example we can draw on as we chart the way forward on biodiversity for the next decade and beyond. As part of the discussions on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, Parties are considering the development of a monitoring framework as well as an enhanced planning, reporting and review mechanism.

The experience with the Biosafety Clearing-House under the Cartagena Protocol, and the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House under the Nagoya Protocol, can help demonstrate the useful role of online information exchange mechanisms as tools to support implementation. More broadly, information sharing is also reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 16 on “peace, justice and strong institutions” and its target to ensure public access to information.

I urge you all to bring these experiences to the table to help inform and enrich the deliberations on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.



Dear colleagues,

Convening this meeting is of extra importance given that it has been over four years since the last meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee was held. There have been a lot of changes in the Secretariat during this time, and I recognize that work on the Biosafety Clearing-House may have suffered as a result. I affirm my commitment to the Biosafety Clearing-House, the fundamental role it plays in the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol and the Secretariat's responsibility in managing and maintaining the platform.

I am pleased that we have reinvigorated the work on the Biosafety Clearing-House in recent months, and I know that many of you have been very involved in testing the new platform that is under development. Your role as an informal advisory committee is to provide advice to me and the Secretariat on the technical development and implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House, and your feedback is invaluable as we work to build a new Biosafety Clearing-House that responds to the needs of users.

I know my colleagues are excited to present to you the work they have been doing and are looking forward to hearing your thoughts. We look forward to working with you to build a Biosafety Clearing-House that is fit for the next decade and beyond.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, several meetings under the Cartagena Protocol have been held online through virtual means. From this experience, I am very confident that, despite the physical distance, you will be able to have fruitful deliberations.

I look forward to seeing the outcomes of your work.

Thank you very much.
