Update on the CHRONOGRAM for the migration of the Biosafety Clearing-House

Background and context for the migration of the Biosafety Clearing-House

In its decision CP-VIII/2, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol requested the Executive Secretary to undertake a number of tasks related to the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH), including carrying out its full migration to its new platform and sending to the BCH focal points a chronogram detailing the migration and follow-up processes.

In response to the request in decision CP-VIII/2, paragraph 8(c), the Secretariat prepared a chronogram outlining the timeline for the migration of the BCH to its new platform and follow-up processes. The chronogram was shared with national focal points for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the BCH through notification 2019-063[1] issued on 25 July 2019 and was made available on the home page of the old BCH platform.

The new BCH platform went officially live on 29 November 2021.

In its decision CP-10/5, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol welcomed the migration of the central portal of the Biosafety Clearing-House to its new platform and the improvements made in accordance with the joint modalities of operation for the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention, the Biosafety Clearing-House and the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House.

The table below shows the nine activities that were set out in the chronogram as part of the migration, and their status as at April 2023. More details are also provided below.

Status of progress made against the chronogram

	Activity	*Status as at April 2023*
01	*Development of common formats*	Completed
02	*Development of the search interface and display of search results*	Completed
03	*Development of the BCH training site*	Completed
04	*Migration of the national reports*	Completed
05	*Testing phase*	Completed
06	*Initial set of statistical tools ("Sort", "Group", "Table", "Send", "Print" and "Export")*	Completed
07	*Migration of existing plug-ins and other existing BCH applications*	Completed
08	*Development of new record functionalities*	Completed
09	*Migration of online forums*	Ongoing

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[1] https://www.cbd.int/doc/notifications/2019/ntf-2019-063-bs-en.pdf

Further details on the activities in the chronogram

1. *Development of common formats*

The previous BCH included twenty common formats. The common formats have been reviewed and re-developed to address developments under the Protocol and to improve consistency across the clearing-houses. Some revisions were minor, such as fixing formatting issues and updating reference links in footnotes. Others were more substantive and involved renaming of fields, adding/removing selection options, aligning with common formats of the ABS Clearing-House (ABSCH) and the clearing house of the Convention (CHM). All existing data in the previous BCH submitted through common formats was successfully transferred to the new platform.

The new platform also has 20 common formats (not including the national reports). The most significant changes to the common formats are provided below:

a) A new common format ("Supplementary Protocol Competent Authority (SPCA)") for registering a competent authority for the Nagoya – Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress has been created pursuant to decision CP-9/15, paragraph 6.

b) The common format on "Biosafety organization", including "Laboratory for detection and identification of LMOs", has been split into two separate common formats – one on organizations and one on laboratories. This was done to enable the alignment of the "organizations" common format across the CHM, the ABSCH and the BCH.

c) The "Biosafety Information Resource Centre (BIRC" common format was slightly revised and renamed to the "Biosafety Virtual Library Resource (VLR)" so that it is in harmony with the ABSCH and the CHM.

d) The two formats, "Submissions from Parties and other Governments" and "Submissions from relevant organizations", were combined into one "Submissions" common format whose purpose is to publish submissions received in response to notifications.

e) The common format on "Capacity-Building Activities, Projects and Opportunities" has been revised and renamed to "Capacity Development Initiatives (CDI)" to align it better with the comparable common format in the ABSCH and the CHM.

f) A new common format, titled "Country Profiles for Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH)", was developed as a national record type to allow users to add or update the information that appears as part of the country's profile page.

2. *Development of the search interface and display of search results*

The new *Search* interface has been developed that follows the same format (front-end) and back-end as the *Search* interface in the ABSCH. It now has a *single* search interface which can be used to combine data from different common formats. The distinctiveness of the BCH consists in the existence of various sub-categories of data in its common formats and the need to enable broad multi-level searching of this data, for example being able to search all *Decisions* on a specific *LMO* for *intentional introduction into the environment*. The multi-level search function was preserved and enhanced to enable more detailed searches within the categories of data in the common formats by offering users a wide selection of global filters and sub-filters to perform the search. The new platform also allows for various options to display the list of search results.

3. Development of the BCH training site

In keeping with the tradition of the previous BCH platform, the Secretariat developed the training site interface on the new BCH platform. The training site allows users to familiarize themselves with the BCH and fully operate on the BCH in a "training mode", hence, without any impact on the real data. The BCH users can practice publishing different types of information in the BCH without these records appearing as official records.

4. Migration of national reports

The common format for the fourth national report on the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol was developed and made available on the new platform. In addition, all the data from the previous national reports has also been migrated to the new site and is searchable through the *Search* interface and in the Report Analyzer.

The Report Analyzer tool has been enhanced to include new features such as the possibility to compare answers to questions in the fourth national report with the answers to the equivalent questions in the second national report, as well as aggregation by Parties, non-Parties, and the ability to export and print data.

5. Testing phase

During the migration process, the testing of the new BCH platform started in March 2020 and was carried out internally within the Secretariat and externally through the "BCH on BCH Forum" with the participation of CPB and BCH focal points, National Authorized Users, BCH-IAC members, UNEP-GEF Regional Advisors and other stakeholders. The testing was performed on a step-by-step basis, meaning that records and features were tested as they became available, and it involved testing of the core functions of the BCH – *submitting* information and *searching* for information - as well as other enhanced and new features.

The comments and suggestions made by users were compiled by the Secretariat and implemented in the new platform to ensure its proper functioning and user-friendliness.

6. Development of statistical tools

New statistical tools have been developed in the new BCH platform that allow users to present search results in different ways such as the possibility to *Sort*, *Group*, *Share*, *Print*, *Export* results and generate PDFs, *Matrix* and *List* views.

The *Country Profiles* page has been enhanced to include a map and a section with an overview of national records for all countries, as well as various filters to help users narrow their search and export the results.

7. Migration of existing plug-ins and other existing BCH applications

Several plug-ins and applications that were active in the previous BCH were migrated to the new platform, including a plug-in that enables the comparison of decisions on LMOs published in the BCH with decisions on the BioTradeStatus database maintained by CropLife International, LMO quick-links and the Hermes and Ajax plug-in national website tools that allow countries to display autonomously their own BCH data on their national websites and/or databases. The Ajax plug-in national website tool was replaced with the new "Embed" feature available through the Search interface, which enables countries to retrieve search results and records from the BCH and incorporate them easily into national websites. Websites previously using the Ajax plug-in were migrated to the new "Embed" feature.

8. *Development of new record functionalities*

The new BCH platform offers many new and enhanced features, such as different options for sharing of data of draft and published records, generation of a PDF of a record/records, exporting results into various formats, enhanced matrix display of records, ability to view the history of published records and compare different versions to see clearly changes made to a record over time, and a user-friendly mechanism to report issues with a published record.

In addition, a new home page was designed with dynamic content with a view to enhancing the user experience and facilitating access to information on how to search and submit information.

9. *Migration of online forums*

Thematic portals and online forums have been widely used in response to requests by the Conferences of the Parties serving as the meetings of the Parties to the Protocol.

The forums that were available on the old platform are gradually being moved to the new one as the need arises. The risk assessment and risk management portal has been migrated to a new landing page on the BCH. The portal includes the Open-ended Online Forum on Risk Assessment, which was held from 10 to 21 April 2023 and was the first forum to be hosted on the new platform. Furthermore, a suite of changes was made to the interface to improve the use of the forum and facilitate interactions.

Future online discussions and forums relevant to the Cartagena Protocol will also be hosted on the new platform, using the improved interface. While many of the forums and thematic portals currently remain on the old platform, work is under way to begin the migration of that content.