UNEP

United Nations
Environment Programme

UNEP-GEF Projects on
National Biosafety Frameworks

GEF

Global Environment
Facility

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Questionnaire on resources and expertise available in countries
for the exchange of information with the Biosafety Clearing House of
the Cartagena Protocol

Summary of results

Introduction

The Questionnaire was prepared by the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Team in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity with the aim to evaluate the state of access and use of the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH) of the Cartagena Protocol. It was sent, along with an explanatory note, to ICCP, Cartagena Protocol, BCH and CBD Focal Points and other relevant officials of 196 countries worldwide. For information purposes, the same documents were also sent, when relevant, to the 113 National Executing Agencies involved in the UNEP-GEF Project on Development of National Biosafety Frameworks.

The instructions in the explanatory note explicitly requested that the person/s filling in the questionnaire should be the one responsible for entering / registering data on the Biosafety Clearing House.

Respondents

As of 1 July 2003, the questionnaire was filled in by 94 persons from 82 countries.

Figure 1 show the percentage of replies by the region[*].

58.1% of respondents reported to be officially nominated BCH focal points. 88.3% of respondents are familiar with the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, 55.4% of them have been involved in

Figure 1 Replies received by region

NDC 11.7%
Africa 18.1%
LAC 25.5%
CE 22.3%
AP 22.3%

ICCP (Intergovernmental Committee on the Cartagena Protocol) and 76.1% are familiar with the BCH.

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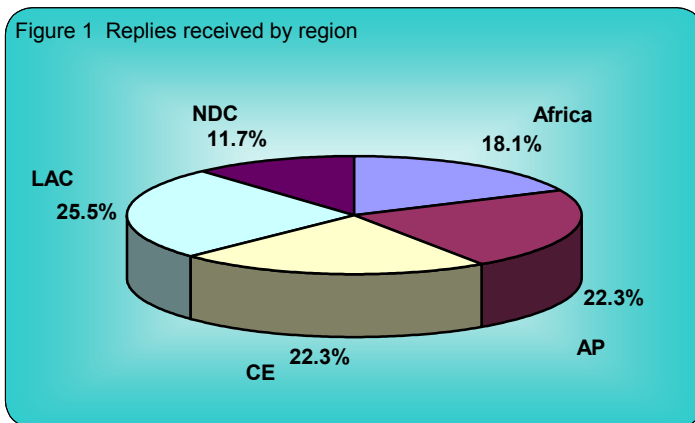
[*] Hereinafter AP stands for «Asia and Pacific», CEE - «Central and Eastern Europe», LAC - «Latin America and the Caribbean», NDC - «Not Developing Countries».

Workstation

Majority of respondents (96.8%) use their computer workstations in the office, some of them (3.2%) work both in the office and at home. While computers are normally used by one person in NDC (100%) and CEE (90.5%), many respondents in the other regions share their computers with a group of 2-5 colleagues: Africa (70.6% shared computers), AP (47.6%), LAC (33.4%). Computers are usually password protected (81.9%) and offices are locked or guarded outside working hours (84%).

The accessibility of computers through a local area network (LAN) varies between the regions, from 90.9% in NDC to 47.1% in Africa (See Figure 2).

97.9% of respondents have a PC with Windows as the operating system, 2.1% are not aware of the type of a computer and an operating system used. The majority of computers have Pentium III (30.9%) or Pentium IV (53.2%) processors.

Figure 2. Is your computer accessible through a Local Area Network?

About 60% of computers have at least 128 MB of RAM (random access memory) and more than 10 GB of storage space available at their hard disks (see Figures 3 and 4).
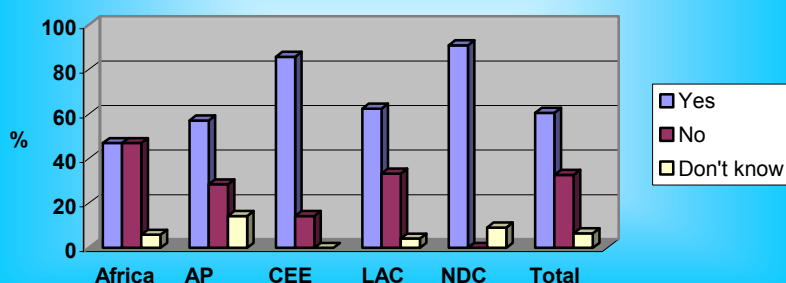
Figure 3. RAM available

Figure 4. HD size

< 5 GB
9%

5-10 GB
12%

11-40 GB
51%

> 40 GB
10%

don't know
18%

2

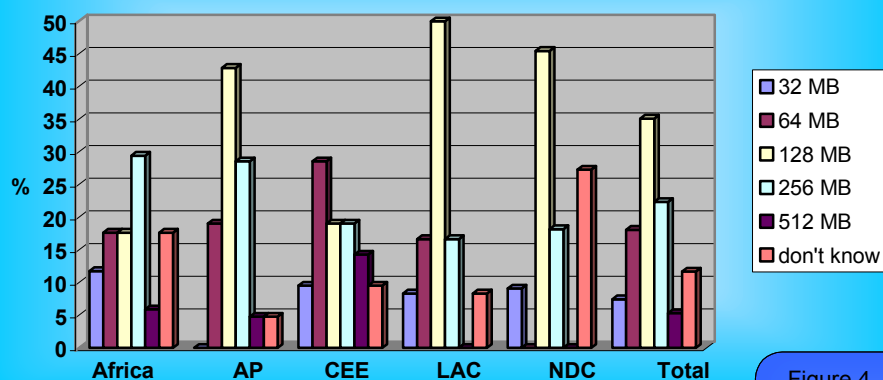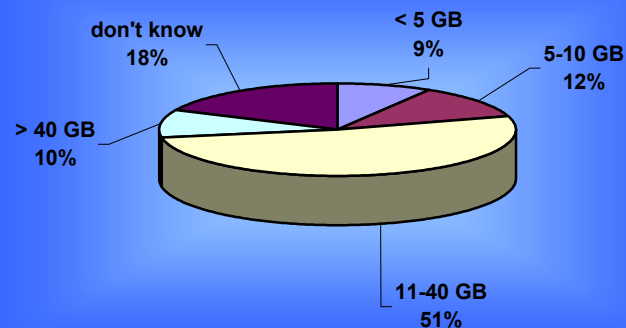## Software

Almost all the respondents (93.6%) use either Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator as Internet browsers, 3.2% of respondents have not installed any browsers due to unavailability of Internet connection.

93.5% of respondents have various e-mail applications, with MS Outlook being most commonly used. Other e-mail applications mentioned are Eudora, Netscape Messenger, Lotus Notes, Pegasus, Foxmail, The Bat!, Webmail and GroupWise.

The majority of respondents (>95%) reported to have a word processor (MS Word, WordPerfect, Star Office), spreadsheet (MS Excel, Lotus 123, Star Office), database (MS Access, FoxPro, SQL, Oracle Developer, Star Office), antivirus (Norton Antivirus, Antiviral Toolkit Pro, AVP, Dr.Web, F-prot, Mc Afee, Sophos, Vet XP Antivirus), file compression utility (Win Zip, Win Rar, Power Archiver, PKZIP, PowerZip, ECW) and Acrobat Reader. Other less common software includes: FTP (42.7%) or Telnet (34.8%) applications, image reader (69.7%) and desktop publisher (39.1%).

Internet connection

Most computers are connected to the Internet through LAN (62.4%) with the highest percentage in CEE (85.7%) and the lowest in Africa (29.4%). Although modem use is low as a global percentage (18.3%), some regions have reported higher values: Asia and Pacific (42.9%) and Africa (29.4%).

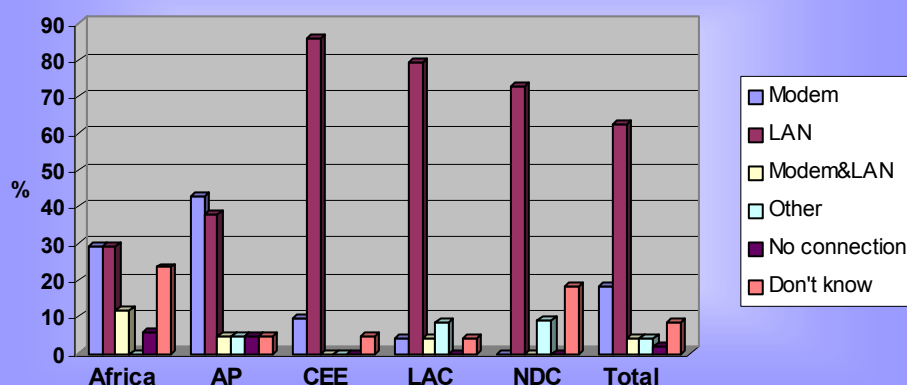Figure 5. How is your computer connected to Internet?

Figure 6. What is the average speed available to your computer for Internet connection?
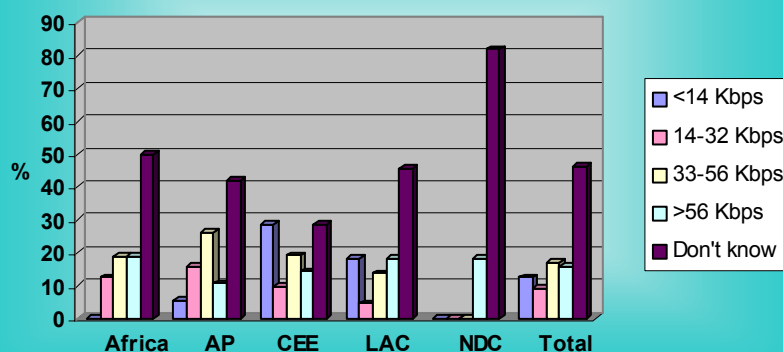
Internet connection maximum and average speeds are variable and many "don't know " answers have been reported (46.1%). Nearly half of respondents reported a maximum speed of more than 56 Kbps (45.6%), with a smaller group between 33 Kbps and 56 Kbps (14.4%), and only a few people with < 14 Kbps (2.2%). The majority of respondents have an Internet connection average speed of at

3

least 14 Kbps, with the exception of CEE countries, about one third of which have reported an average speed of less than 14 Kbps (See Figure 6).
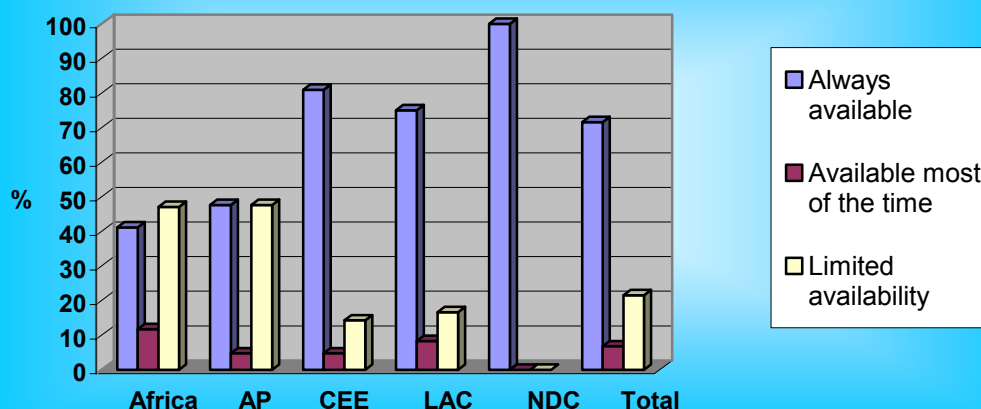
Internet reliability (globally at 71.6%) varies amongst the regions. The lowest availability of 24h/7d Internet connection is in Asia and Pacific (47.6%) and Africa (47.1%), and the highest is in NDC (100%) and CEE (81.0%).

Figure 7. Availability of Internet connection

In case of Internet connection failure or computer malfunctioning 84.4% of respondents are able to seek assistance of a system administrator or a help desk. At the same time, only 53.3% of computers are protected by a firewall globally and this percentage is even lower in Africa (23.5%) and Asia and Pacific (33.3%).

E-mail

Almost all respondents have an e-mail account (95.7%) usually owned by single users (88.6%).

16.1% of e-mail accounts are managed by agencies, where the respondents work, 31% by external providers, the rest of respondents (52.9%) are not aware of the type of an e-mail provider. Less than a half of e-mail providers limit the amount of messages and/or attachments respondents may receive and send them warning messages if an inbox is full.

The majority of the respondents do not know the maximum size of attachment they are able to receive or send by e-mail. However, some respondents are aware that they cannot receive (11.8%) or send (28.1%) attachments bigger than 2 MB.

Data storage and Biosafety Database

More than half of the respondents are familiar with data management or database software (53.8%), 34.5% of them designed a database while 27.3% inserted data into biosafety databases.

41.9% of the respondents are familiar with various GMO and biosafety related databases, although this percentage is lower in Africa (17.6%) and Asia and Pacific (23.8%). The GMO databases mentioned by respondents include:

- Agbios - essential biosafety;
- Agris Database;
- UNIDO database BINAS;
- Central and Eastern Europe website on Biosafety;
- Databases "Cloning: Past, Present and the Exciting Future", "Induced mutant resource", "Royal Society Science Brief: GM animals", "Transgenetic Animals", "Use of Genetically Modified Animals";
- ICGEB Biosafety Database;
- Joint Research Centre Ispra European Commission database;
- OECD database BioTrac;
- Austrian database Gentechnikregister;
- FAO database RedBio;
- BIOBIN;
- USDA Database;
- Pilot BCH.

76.1% of respondents reported the intention of their countries to set up a national biosafety database, very often as an activity under UNEP-GEF project on the development of national biosafety framework.

A third of the respondents have indicated that there are GMO databases existing in their country, half of which are available on the Internet. The majority of respondents from countries with a national GMO database in place are aware of existing procedures to make information available to the BCH (56.7%) and a significant group are also aware of existing protocols for interoperability of national biosafety database with the BCH (42.9%). 79.5% of these respondents have reported that their countries plan to make biosafety information available to the international community by making parts of existing national databases available or interoperable with the BCH.

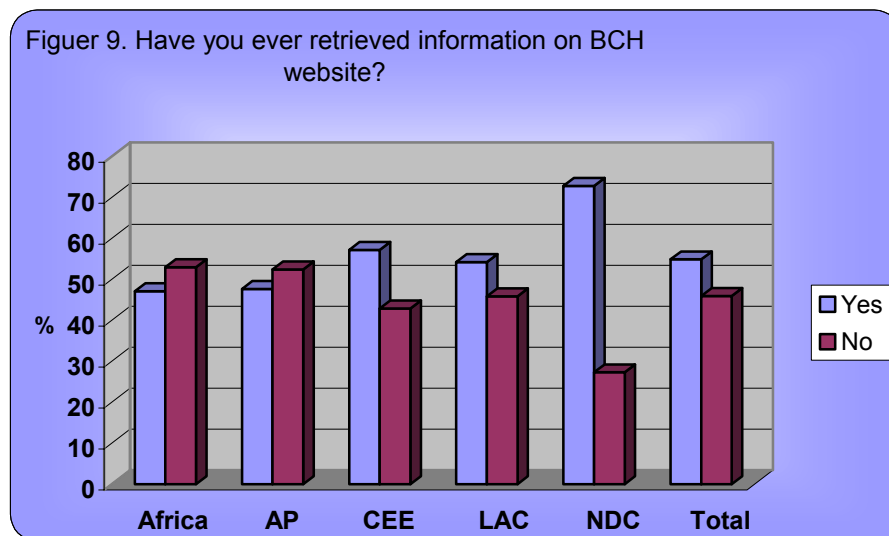Figure 8. Do you know whether your country plans to use the central BCH to store their data?
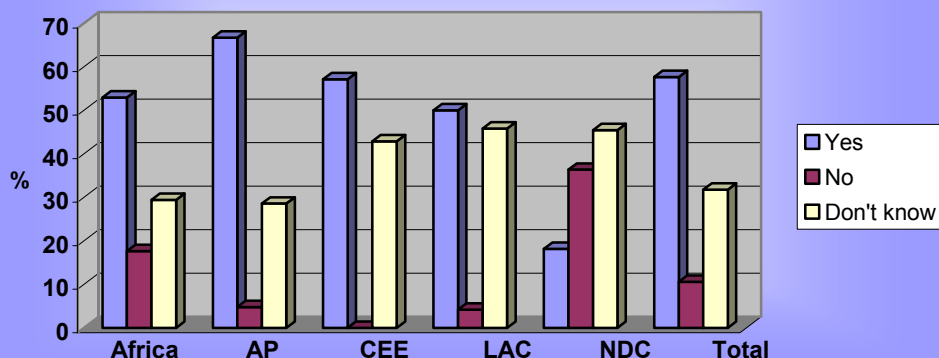
The majority of respondents have indicated that their countries plan to use the central BCH database located at the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to store their biosafety data (57.6%) while 31.8% are not aware of such plans. It

should be noted that only 18.2% of respondents from NDC plan to use the central BCH (See Figure 8).

Biosafety Clearing House

The majority of respondents reported that their government has already identified one or more persons responsible for the exchange of information through the BCH (60.9%) and officially communicated this information to the Secretariat of CBD (55.4%).

54.8% of the respondents have browsed through the BCH website (see Figure 9), found the information easy to retrieve (80.4%) and have not experienced any problems (73.5%).

Figuer 9. Have you ever retrieved information on BCH website?

However, less than a half of the respondents (44.6%) knew of a new version on the BCH released on 1 February 2003.

Only a small number of the respondents (11.7%) have inserted data into the BCH on behalf of their government, in CEE and AP this percentage is even smaller (4.8%).

Figure 10. Have you ever inserted data into BCH on behalf of your government?
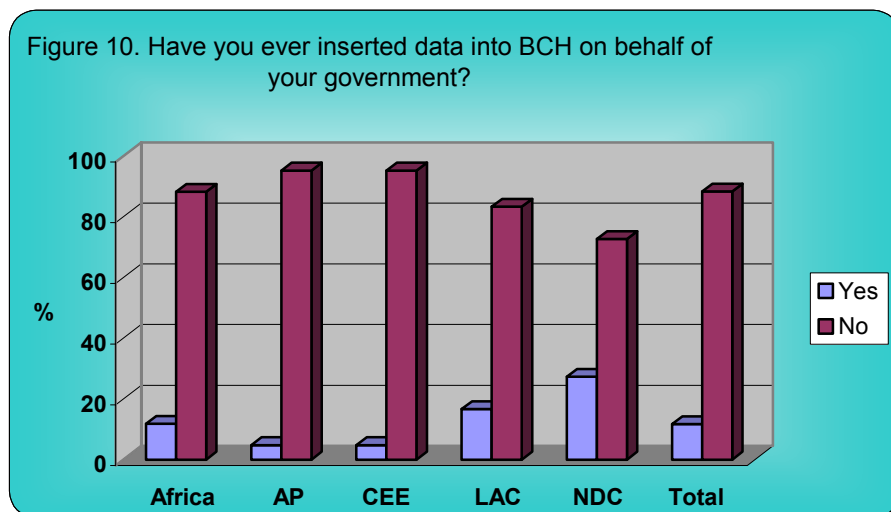
44% and 32.2% of the respondents have contacted or been contacted by the CBD Secretariat and their government respectively for the reasons concerning the Pilot Phase BCH.

Needs for assistance as identified by countries

The majority of respondents (71.3%) have indicated the kind of assistance they would like to receive in order to improve their use of the BCH. These include:

- Hardware (25.4%);
- Software (17.9%);
- Better Internet connection (10.4%);
- Technical support (17.9%);
- Training in information management (50.7%);
- Training in use of the BCH (61.2%);
- Financial support (19.4%);
- Provision of information on the BCH (20.9%).

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Questionnaire on the resources and the expertise available in countries for the exchange of information with the Biosafety Clearing-House of the Cartagena Protocol

This questionnaire is designed to find out what is the state of access and use of the Biosafety Clearing House in your country. We would like to know, in detail, what resources you have, in your country, for the exchange of information with the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH) of the Cartagena Protocol. We will use the information you provide to help your country to make the best use of the BCH and provide adequate training for the use of the BCH, in future. We would like to know about your access to the BCH via the Internet and your ability to exchange information with the BCH, in light of the obligations on countries once the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety will be in force.

The CBD Secretariat and the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Team are cooperating on this questionnaire in order to reach all countries and to better advise all those involved in supporting the Cartagena Protocol about the global situation on access to the Biosafety Clearing House and any gaps in access to the BCH, so that appropriate measures may be planned.

Please note that all information received will be treated as strictly confidential and only aggregate data will be made available to third parties

Who should fill in the Questionnaire?

We are asking to fill in the questionnaire to the person/s that will actually be responsible for entering / registering the data on the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH). This person/s will have received a password in order to be able to complete this work. The person/s will not necessarily be the official BCH Focal Point requested in ICCP recommendation 2/8 since this position has the formal duty of validating data registered on the Biosafety Clearing-House for that country.

We know that it may well be possible to answer these questions with a team of people, who may jointly be able to answer the questions, but the purpose of this questionnaire is to find out what each country is *currently* capable of doing according to the current design of the Biosafety Clearing House. We are asking therefore to have this questionnaire filled in by the major end user/s of the BCH.

Note: This questionnaire is also available on the UNEP-GEF Project web site at http://www.unep.ch/biosafety/BCHquestionnaire.pdf.

Thank you for your cooperation.

The UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit

Please return this questionnaire duly-completed by mail, fax or e-mail by February 28, 2003 to:

UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit
International Environment House, 15 Chemin des Anemones, 1219 Chatelaine, Geneva, Switzerland.
Tel. (+41) 22 9178410; Fax: (+41) 22 9178070; e-mail: biosafety@unep.ch

Section 1. - Contact details:

1.   Country

_____

2.   Agency or Unit or Department

_____

3.   Postal address

_____

4.   Name

_____

5.   Surname

_____

6.   Title

_____

7.   Telephone

_____

8.   Fax

_____

9.   E-mail address (es)

_____

Section 2. - Workstation:

10.   Where is your computer workstation located? (Office, other organization, home, etc.)

_____

11.   How many people work on the same computer?

_____

12.   How many other people have physical access to the same computer?

_____

13.   Is your computer accessible through a local area network (LAN)?
☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes

_____

14.   Is the room usually locked (or guarded) outside office hours? - ☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes

_____

15.   Is your computer password protected? - ☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes

_____

16.   What kind of computer do you usually use?   ☐ I don't know

    i.   Type: PC / Mac / other (please specify the computer)

_____

    ii.   Processor (Pentium II, III, IV, Mac G3, G4, etc)   ☐ I don't know

_____

    iii.   Operating system: - Windows / Mac Os / UNIX / Linux, other (please specify version
        used)   ☐ I don't know

_____

    iv.   Memory (RAM) available (32Mb, 64Mb, etc)   ☐ I don't know

_____

    v.   Storage space available (HD size)   ☐ I don't know

_____

Section 3. - Software:

17.   Which of the following programmes type have you installed on your computer? Please
specify exact name and version of the software installed.

    i.   Internet Browser (Explorer, Netscape, Opera, Lynx, etc.)
        ☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, name and version:

_____

    ii.   E-mail (Outlook, Eudora, Pegasus, etc.)
        ☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, name and version:

_____

    iii.   FTP (file transfer protocol)
        ☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, name and version:

_____

    iv.   Telnet application
        ☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, name and version:

_____

    v.   Word processor (MS Word, WordPerfect, etc.)
        ☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, name and version:

_____

    vi.   Spreadsheet (MS Excel, Lotus 123, etc)
        ☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, name and version:

_____

    vii.   Database (MS Access, FileMaker, etc)
        ☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, name and version:

_____

viii.   Image reader
☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, name and version:

_____

ix.   Desktop Publisher (MS Publisher, Adobe PageMaker, etc.)
☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, name and version:

_____

x.   Antivirus (Norton, McAfee, etc.)
☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, name and version:

_____

xi.   File compression (WinZip, etc)
☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, name and version:

_____

xii.   Adobe Acrobat (full program or reader only?)
☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, name and version:

_____

xiii.   Other (please specify)
☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, name and version:

_____

Section 4. - Internet connection

18.   How is your computer connected to Internet?
Modem / ISDN / DSL-Cable / LAN / other, (please provide full details)   ☐ I don't know

_____
_____

19.   What is the maximum speed available to your computer for Internet connection?

☐ I don't know

_____

20.   What is the average speed available to your computer for Internet connection?

☐ I don't know

_____

21.   Is the Internet connection always available to your computer? - ☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes

_____

22.   In case of connection failure or computer malfunctioning is there a system administrator or a help desk you can directly contact? - ☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes

_____

23.   Is your computer protected by a firewall? - ☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details:

_____
_____

Section 5. - E-mail access

24.   Do you have a working e-mail account? - ☐ No - ☐ Yes

_____

If your answered NO to the previous question, please ignore the rest of this section (Q:24-30)

25.   Is your e-mail account shared with other people? - ☐ I don't know -☐ No - ☐ Yes

_____

26.   Is your e-mail account managed by your agency or by an external provider?

☐ I don't know

_____

27.   How often do you check your e-mail?

_____

28.   Does the service provider limit the amount of e-mail or attachments you may receive in any way? - ☐ I don't know -☐ No - ☐ Yes

_____

29.   What is the maximum size of a file you may receive as attachment?   ☐ I don't know

_____

30.   What is the maximum size of a file you may send as attachment?   ☐ I don't know

_____

31.   Do you receive any warning message if your e-mail inbox is full?
☐ I don't know ☐ No - ☐ Yes

_____

Section 6. - Data storage and Biosafety Database

32.   Are you familiar with data management or use of database software? ☐ No - ☐ Yes

_____

33.   Are you familiar with any database related to genetically modified organisms (GMOs or LMOs)? - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details:

_____
_____

34.   Are you aware of any plan in your country to set up a national biosafety database?
☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details:

_____
_____

35. Are you aware of any existing database, in your country, related to genetically modified organisms (GMOs or LMOs)? - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details:

_____

_____

If your answered NO to the previous question, please ignore the next 6 questions (Q: 36-41)

36. Is this database available on the Internet?
☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please provide the URL:

_____

_____

37. Do you know where this database is currently located?
☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details:

_____

_____

38. Do you know whether this database include confidential information?
☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes

_____

39. Are you aware of existing procedure to make information held by national or regional databases available to the Pilot Phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH)?
☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details.

_____

_____

40. Are you aware of existing protocols for interoperability of national biosafety databases with the Pilot Phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH)? ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details.

_____

_____

41. Do you know whether your country plans to make its biosafety information available to the international community by making parts of their national databases available or interoperable with the BCH? - ☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes

_____

42. Do you know whether your country plans to use the central BCH databases located at the Secretariat to store their data? - ☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details:

_____

_____

43. Have you ever inserted data into any database related to biosafety or genetically modified organisms (GMOs or LMOs)? - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details.

_____

_____

44. Have you ever designed a database? - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details.

_____

_____

Section 7. - Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH)

45. Are you familiar with the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety? - ☐ No - ☐ Yes

_____

46. Are you familiar with the Biosafety Clearing-House of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety? ☐ No - ☐ Yes

_____

47. Have you been involved in the ICCP process? - ☐ No - ☐ Yes

_____

48. Are you aware whether your government has already identified one or more persons responsible for the exchange of information through the BCH in your country? ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details.

_____

_____

49. In case you answered yes to the previous question, do you know if your government has officially communicated the above information to the CBD Secretariat? - ☐ No - ☐ Yes

_____

50. Are you the official BCH National Focal Point? - ☐ No - ☐ Yes

_____

51. Do you know how many people/departments will need to access information in the BCH? ☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details:

_____

_____

52. Do you know how many people/departments will need to register information with the BCH? ☐ I don't know - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details:

_____

_____

53. Have you ever retrieved information on the BCH web site at http://bch.biodiv.org/Pilot/Home.asp ? - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details:

_____

_____

If your answered NO to the previous question, please ignore the next 2 questions (Q54-55)

54.   Do you find the information contained in the BCH easy to retrieve? - ☐ No - ☐ Yes
_____

55.   Did you experience any problem while browsing the BCH?
      ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details.

_____

56.   Are you aware that a new version of the BCH has been released on February 1, 2003?
      ☐ No - ☐ Yes
_____

57.   Have you ever inserted data into the BCH on behalf of your government?
      ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details.

_____
_____

58.   If you answered yes to the previous question, did you experience any problem while inserting
      data into the BCH?
      ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details.

_____
_____

59.   How many people do you know have inserted data on behalf of your government?

                                                                    ☐ I don't know
_____
_____

60.   Have you ever contacted, or been contacted by, the CBD Secretariat for reasons concerning
      the pilot phase of the BCH? - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details.

_____
_____

61.   Have you ever contacted, or been contacted by, your government for reasons concerning the
      pilot phase of the BCH? - ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details.

_____
_____

62.   Is there any specific section of the BCH for which you would like to propose changes?
      ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details.

_____
_____

63. Is there any new section you would like to propose for the BCH?
    ☐ No - ☐ Yes, Please give details.

    _____

    _____

64. Could you indicate what kind of assistance would you like to receive in order to improve your use of the BCH?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

Please add your comments on any aspect of this questionnaire:

    _____

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