20th anniversary of the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

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From negotiations of the Protocol to 20 years later

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1986 – 2000: In charge of biosafety/GMO regulation in the Netherlands
2000 – 2002: Supporting EU accession countries with biosafety/GMO regulation
2002 – 2004: Leading the UNEP-GEF National Biosafety Framework Implementation Project
2004 – today: Supporting public research institutes, international organisations and governments
2006 – today: Faculty of Sciences, Ghent University, Belgium
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Topics

- Background and history - starting in 1972
- Was it worth the effort?

Biotechnology and biosafety in the CBD and its protocols – background

1972: UN Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm

1992: UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro)
> Agenda 21, 40 Chapters
Chapter 16 on Biotechnology:
'Maximise benefits, minimize risks'

1992: Convention on Biological Diversity:

1972: First rDNA applications started global debate on benefits and risks.

1975: Asilomar conference: no inherent risk, but novel combinations may require risk assessment

1983: First transgenic plants - intensified the global debate on anticipated benefits and potential risks

Biotechnology and Biosafety in the CBD

- Art. 8g: *(In situ conservation of biodiversity*): Obligation to develop and maintain **biosafety systems**

- Art. 16: (*Access to and Transfer of Technology):* Access to and transfer of biotechnology are **essential elements** to attain the objectives of the CBD.

- Art. 19: (*Handling biotechnology and distribution of its benefits)*
  - Art. 19.1 and 19.2: obligation for **biotechnology transfer**
  - Art. 19.3: Consider **a protocol on biosafety**

  ➢ Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

1996 - 2000 negotiations by the OEWG on Biosafety, CPB adopted in January 2000

Introduction to the CPB, e.g.: "*The Protocol thus creates an enabling environment making it possible* ***to derive maximum benefits while minimizing possible risks***"

Key elements of the CPB:

- Tools for informed decision making on import of LMOs by countries that do not have domestic regulatory frameworks for biosafety (e.g. AIA - see art. 9.2.c)
- International agreement on the definition of LMOs
- International agreement on environmental risk assessment for LMOs
- International agreement on information sharing and the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH)

CPB 20 years later: was it worth the effort?

Yes

Despite that very few countries that do not yet have domestic regulatory frameworks for biosafety have used the AIA procedure, the process of negotiating and implementing the CPB has been worthwhile for several reasons, such as:

- The LMO definition is used in many jurisdictions (even of countries that are not party to the CPB) thereby contributing to international harmonization
- The CPB methodology of environmental risk assessment of LMOs is applied in many systems, thereby contributing to harmonization
- The variety of regulatory tools in the CPB (e.g., authorizations, notifications, simplified procedures, and exemptions) has helped countries fine tuning their national systems
- The BCH has grown into a highly valuable mechanism for information exchange
- The CPB is a constant reminder of the CBD's recognition that biotechnologies are essential to the objectives of the CBD, and of the obligation of biotechnology transfer

Thank You