

SWITZERLAND

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On 11 September 2003, Switzerland launched the pilot phase of the Swiss Biosafety Clearing-House (www.ch-bch.ch) to fulfill its obligation under the Cartagena Protocol.

The time between the entry into force of the Protocol and the first meeting of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in February 2004 in Kuala Lumpur should be used to test the current version of the Pilot Phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House and to build sufficient national experience. In this regard, the Swiss Agency for Environment, Forests and Landscape, with the support of the Geneva Environment Network, is organizing a technical meeting on "Implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) in industrialized countries. Experiences and future development" in Geneva on 29 and 30 September. We will provide the Secretariat with a report of this meeting

The main challenge for full and efficient operability of the Biosafety Clearing-House will be to ensure the participation of all Parties and Governments. This will require additional financial resources and better use of existing resources. Switzerland therefore fully supports the UNEP proposal submitted to the GEF on building capacity for effective participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House as an add-on module to the current GEF Project on development of the National Biosafety Framework. Furthermore, according to the recommendation of third meeting of the ICCP, a transparent and effective coordination mechanism should be established under the supervision of the Secretariat to ensure efficient synergies with existing initiatives.