

For a Successful Asia BCH Family

Background of Asia BCH Family



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The efforts towards enhancing the capacity of Asian countries to implement the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, specifically Article 20, started in 2004 during the COP-MOP 4 in Bonn, Germany. This was initiated by the Republic of Korea, thru the Korea Biosafety Clearing-House (KBCH) in coordination with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Global Environment Facility (GEF). As a take off point, a Subregional Workshop was held in Daejeon, Republic of Korea in December 2008.

From 2008 to present, the meeting of Asian countries took place aimed to provide a thorough understanding of the status and identifying challenges as well in assisting countries in BCH implementation across Asia. Given this, the countries in 2011, recognized the importance of regional networking for a more effective and efficient BCH-related endeavors. More straightforward concerns such as risk assessment issues, administrative matters, and updating of records were given utmost attention and corresponding actions.

The clamor for sustained regional cooperation was still apparent in 2013. The Asian countries realized the importance of enhancing their existing collaborative mechanisms in order to be self-sustaining by year 2020 and beyond. The need to come up with a workable strategy then became a common call by all the participating countries and UNEP. Because of this, the Asia BCH Family was born.

Today, the Asia BCH Family is undertaking bold steps to make this shared vision a reality. With the cooperation of member-countries, the Family aims to contribute to the effort towards enhancing safety in the transfer, handling, and use of living modified organisms to protect and sustain the biological diversity.

Asia BCH Roadmap as Enhancer of Regional Cooperation to Improve Compliance



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The Asia BCH Roadmap has been developed consistent with the aim of BCH for enhanced sharing of information and participation of member countries through a network system - Asia Biosafety Clearing-House (ABCH). It also aims to enhance the capacity of the Asian countries to implement CPB through ABCH by adopting various approaches including enhancing awareness, education, and participation of policy makers in Asia.

Due to varying degrees of mainstreaming biosafety, technical, finance, and manpower capabilities, some countries may neither be able to prepare the necessary documentation for funding nor in the position to meet compliance. We are one Asia family. Every country can contribute according to their capacity. The able ones can help the less able ones and the less able ones can help the least able ones. Let us work together, learn together, grow together, and accept each other with a bid to emerge the Asia BCH family as a shining example for cooperation in every aspect



China Support to the Asia BCH Roadmap



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For participation in biosafety information exchange in Asian region, Nanjing Institute of Environmental Sciences (NIES) under Ministry of Environmental Protection of China (MEP) hosted “the 4th Asian Regional Training Workshop for Biosafety Clearing-House National Focal Points (BCH-NFP)” in Nanjing, China on November 17-20, 2015, which co-initiated and co-funded by UNEP and Korea BCH/KRIBB in partnership with the SCBD. At this meeting, the “Asian Regional BCH Roadmap” was developed. For a support of its implementation, NIES held “the China-ASEAN+ Training Workshop on Biosafety Capacity Building” in Nanjing on September 19-29, 2016 through a special financial support from MEP (KBCH also funded one trainee and resource person), attended by 19 foreign participants from 15 Asian countries and 10 resource persons from UNEP, Republic of Korea, Philippines, Malaysia, and China. It covered implementation for the BCH and Asian BCH Roadmap, hands-on detection of GM rice, corn, soybean and cotton in lab and field, risk assessment of invasive alien species (IAS), and development of two project concepts centered on biosafety capacity building and IAS management. The training assessment showed that above 75% of the trainees grasped the basic knowledge and skills required for GM detection and about 90% trainees thought that its objectives are very clear and its contents are very useful, helpful, and relevant to their work.

Roadmap Coordination



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The Philippines affirmed its commitment to strengthen cooperation in Asia with regard to upholding the provisions of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety by taking the lead as Coordinator of the Asia Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) Roadmap.

The roadmap, developed and approved by the Parties in Asia during an earlier Workshop in Nanjing, China in November 2015, outlines the targets in the next five years (2016-2020) focused on the following areas:

- (1) Compliance with the National Biosafety Framework and Cartagena Protocol;
- (2) Enhancement of regional networking and cooperation;
- (3) Promotion of public awareness, education and information; and
- (4) Building capacity towards effective participation to the BCH

These targets, if realized, shall bring the region a step closer to the vision of a One Asia BCH Family. The fellow Parties who are at the forefront of the initiative—Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Cambodia, and China—together with a representative and consultants from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), discussed the subsequent steps to be undertaken to implement the Asia BCH Roadmap. Agreements reached were the creation of an Informal Consultative Committee (ICC) as an advisory body to promote and sustain activities espoused by the roadmap.

With a clear vision of a “One Asia BCH Family”, the member Parties in Asia eagerly look forward to kick start the sustainable implementation of their activities to become self-sustaining by 2020 and beyond.

Building Self-Sustainability and Application in other Environmental Matters



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The importance of capacity building to attain sustainable development goals has been widely recognized by the international community. In particular, a great deal of attention has been drawn to the specific capacity building needs in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Eight years ago, the Republic of Korea offered to organize and sponsor a sub-regional workshop for enhancing capacity in the use of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH). As a result of this action, three more workshops and several ad hoc meetings were organized in coordination with UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and the Convention on Biological Diversity with support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The collaborative capacity building efforts led by Republic of Korea and UNEP resulted in the genesis of the Asia BCH Family and the consolidation of a successful operational network of cooperation.

During the last four years, UNEP and Korea Biosafety Clearing-House/KRIBB, with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD), the Institute of Environmental Sciences, the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the P.R. of China, Ministry of Environment of Cambodia and the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) from the Philippines have been developing an operational network of cooperation among the Asia BCH family that is envisaged to fulfill Article 20 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB) and related COP-MOP decisions on the BCH.

Quotes from some Asian countries:

During the China-Asean+ Capacity Building Workshop on Biosafety, Sep. 20-21, 2016, Nanjing, China

- "I'm very glad to be part of the Asia BCH Family, for each country to share what they actually did and to learn from them."
- "It can be useful to our country because the countries of the region have experience in different fields which we can learn from."
- "I am very excited and interested to learn from the available knowledge in the Asia BCH Family. Also to network for public awareness, education, and capacity building."
- "I feel very happy to be the part of Asia BCH Family. It will be helpful for our country in advancing its work on Biosafety."
- "It is a good forum to discuss the country's concerns in biosafety. The regional approach will be easier to move ahead."
- "I feel great to be in the Asia BCH family. It is helpful for my country, in case of sharing experiences, knowledge, and helping each other, and working and developing together. I really want to support it with whatever facilities we have."
- "It's a good venue to help each other in the different issues on biosafety activities and regulation."
- "It's a great idea. The Asia BCH Family can provide information from "same condition" countries. We have the benefit of having information for enhancing our own capacity on biosafety. Support can be through providing good information about what we have, what we do and what the problems we face and how we tackle those problems."
- "Having the Asia BCH Family is an asset. It is providing the information, experiences and probably technical and financial support if needed."
- "It is good to have Asia BCH family because it is helpful to my country and we will support it for the sake of biosafety. We are better if we are together."

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For a Successful Asia BCH Family

The Cooperation & The Efforts For Asia BCH Family



ASIA BCH FAMILY
COOPERATION AND CAMARADERIE FOR SUSTAINABLE BIODIVERSITY

Building a Successful BCH Regional Network in Asia



The Beginning

The story of the spirit of camaraderie and cooperation among Asia countries began 12 years ago as an act of kindness from the Republic of Korea. This collaboration reflected in decision BS-IV/2 under Operation and activities of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) Para 9 at the 4th Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties (COP-MOP 4) held in 2008 in Bonn, Germany. During that meeting, the Republic of Korea delegation offered to organize and sponsor a sub-regional workshop for enhancing capacity in the use of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) in coordination with the United Nations Environment Programme - Global Environment Facility (UNEP-GEF).

The genesis of the Asia BCH Family and the consolidation of a successful operational network of cooperation

The decision led to the creation of the Asia BCH Road Map and laid groundwork for collaboration in the region with the aim of increasing safety in the transfer, handling, and use of living modified organisms (LMOs) in Asia to protect

biological diversity from any adverse effects resulting from the introduction of LMOs into the environment.

Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) Activities

KBCH Workshops, Republic of Korea

In response to decision BS-IV/2 Para 9, the UN organized a sub-regional workshop to enhance capacity in the use of the BCH in the Asia Region in collaboration and with financial support from the Korea Biosafety Clearing-House (KBCH). The workshop took place at Korea Research Institute of Bioscience and Biotechnology (KRIBB) in 2008 at Daejeon, Republic of Korea. It aimed to promote cooperation for the development and strengthening of human resources and institutional capacity on biosafety, as mentioned in the Article 22 (Capacity Building) of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB). The agenda of the workshop was focused on technical aspects such as providing a general overview of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, introduction to the BCH central portal, as well as case studies and presentations by countries.

Two years after the first sub-regional workshop, UNEP-GEF Project on "Continued Enhancement of Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House" organized the 2nd Regional Training Workshop for Asia Pacific and CEE Countries in collaboration and with financial support on KBCH in Daejeon, Republic of Korea on October 24-28, 2011. The workshop's main objectives were to enhance the participants' knowledge of BCH

Obligations as Parties to CPB and more importantly, to strengthen collaboration and exchange experiences among participating countries.

In addition to the standard learning modules during BCH workshops, this particular workshop took a more creative strategy to find out the main impediments for registering information into the BCH. It was also able to identify the lack of internal processes and structures to comply with the CPB. All the participants agreed that Regional Networking can be continued and done more frequently through BCH tools such as online forum and conferencing. With Republic of Korea as the host country for this workshop, KBCH Director Dr. Homin Jang, expressed his continued commitment to strengthen the ties of BCH focal points in the Region. He also said that Republic of Korea will remain supportive to succeeding regional workshops ahead.

Siem Reap, Cambodia Workshop

As a fulfillment of its commitment, the KBCH in partnership with UNEP once again, organized the 3rd Asian Regional Workshop on the Biosafety Clearing-House on November 18-20, 2013, at the historic province of Siem Reap, Cambodia. It was organized in partnership with Cambodia's Ministry of Environment and the Secretariat of the National Steering Committee for Biosafety.

The workshop aimed to promote exchange of experiences and better



relationships within the region.

Another goal is for effective collaboration to take place so that countries can help one another in completing their BCH compliance. Specifically, the workshop primarily focused on seeking answers to three main questions-- "Where are we?", "Where do we want to be?", and "How to get there?"

There were a total of 36 participants who represented 13 countries as follows: Southeast Asia (Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and Cambodia), South Asia (Iran, Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka) and North East Asia (China, Mongolia, and Republic of Korea).

COP-MOP 7

During COP-MOP 7 held in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea, Decisions MOP7 BS-VII/1 and 2 Para 3 called on Parties, other Governments, as well as relevant international and regional organizations, to undertake or support capacity building initiatives aimed at assisting developing country Parties (in particular the least developed and small island developing States among them, and Parties with economies in transition) in the use of the BCH. The decision also called for putting in place facilities that will enable them to submit consistent, up-to-date, and complete information through the BCH; as well as their national reports. This will allow developing country Parties to access appropriate technologies for active participation in online activities.

Additionally, Para 4 MOP 7 Decision BS-VII/2 (b) invites the UNEP in its implementation of the BCH III project to promote, regional synergies with Parties that have participated in the BCH II project.

Experts' Meeting Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Once more, the Republic of Korea, in collaboration with UNEP and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD) organized the Asia BCH Ad Hoc Experts' Meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia from July 1-2, 2015 as a response to the above mentioned MOP 7 decisions. This activity is also in support to the Korea Biosafety Capacity Building Initiative launched in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea which aims to implement the Protocol and capacity building.

The Experts' meeting brainstormed to draft a regional strategy supporting the implementation of the Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety for 2011-2020 using the framework of the Korea Biosafety Capacity Building Initiative. The delegation for this meeting also agreed to organize the 4th Asia BCH Workshop in November of the same year to be co-financed by UNEP and the KBCH/KRIBB in cooperation with the SCBD.

Nanjing, China Workshop

As follow-up action of the Experts' meeting, UNEP, in partnership with the KBCH/KRIBB and the SCBD, organized the 4th Asian regional training workshop for Biosafety Clearing-House National Focal Points (BCH-NFP) which was hosted by the Institute of Environmental Sciences, Ministry of Environmental Protection of the People's Republic of China.

The workshop was held from November 17-20, 2015 in Nanjing and is part of the UNEP-GEF Project for Sustainable Capacity Building for Effective Participation in the BCH (BCH III). It was convened to build the regional strategy and Asia BCH Roadmap to enhance Parties' capacity to sustain their activities by 2020 and beyond. In addition, the workshop envisaged to build an operational network of cooperation among the Asia BCH Family to fulfill Article 20 of the CPB and other related COP-MOP decisions on the BCH. Finally, it also aimed to share and exchange information and resources by promoting East-South Cooperation.

The meeting was attended by 41 participants including representatives from the following countries: Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, PR China, Maldives, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Iran, and Mongolia, which are also participants from the upcoming UNEP-GEF BCH III project. The meeting was also attended by representatives from the former BCH II countries: Bhutan, Philippines, Cambodia, Malaysia, India, Lao PDR, and Vietnam.

The following countries, experts, and organizations also attended the meeting: Republic of Korea, KRIBB, Nanjing Institute of Environmental Sciences (NIES), CBD Secretariat, Regional Advisors and UNEP-Division of Environmental Law and Conventions (DELIC).

Achievements of the Asia BCH Family and Follow up Actions for Implementation



Manila, Philippines Meeting

As an offshoot to the Nanjing Workshop, a small Ad Hoc Experts' Meeting was held in Manila, Philippines on April 5-7, 2016 to brainstorm and discuss in detail the subsequent steps that must be undertaken to implement the Asia BCH Roadmap by Asian Parties.

The meeting was organized and financially supported by the Korea Biosafety Clearing-House (KBCH)/KRIBB in collaboration with UNEP and hosted by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) from the Philippines.

The objectives of the meeting were (1) to follow up the implementation of the BCH Asia Roadmap as agreed in Nanjing, China during 2015; (2) designate the Informal Consultative Committee (ICC); (3) elaborate the 2016 work plan envisaged to enhance Asia's Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) Family's capacities; and (4) to promote sustainable CPB implementation by 2020 and beyond.

The Philippines was elected as the Asia BCH Roadmap Coordinator for the first two years of its implementation (2016-2017) and was acknowledged by UNEP and attendees of the meeting to coordinate the implementation of the Asia BCH Roadmap.

Attendees to the meeting were from the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Cambodia, People's Republic of China and Philippines. The countries have shared their invaluable time and insights during the three-day meeting.

Among the major issues addressed were (1) the details to implement the Roadmap including the terms of reference (TOR) for the coordinator of Asia BCH Family; (2) the side event for COP-MOP 8; and (4) the proposal for the mainstreaming of biosafety into the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP).

Daejeon, Republic of Korea Meeting

A meeting between the Philippines (the Roadmap Coordinator) and Republic of Korea (the lead Party of the initiative) was held last July 25-27, 2016 in Daejeon, Korea. The meeting was organized and financially aided by the Korea Biosafety Clearing-House/KRIBB of the Republic of Korea.

The meeting was attended by the team of Dr. Ho Min Jang of the KBCH, the Asia Regional Coordinator and Dr. Seung-Hwan Choi, Republic of Korea representative member to the Compliance Committee of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

The meeting was convened to discuss updates and progress of the agreements reached during the first meeting of the ICC in Manila on the Asia BCH Roadmap. It also aimed to identify the areas of concern that need to be addressed immediately, specifically the strategy to improve the level of compliance in the submission of the Third National Report. And finally, to finalize the plans for the ensuing activities for the year, most especially the Side event for COP-MOP 8. The side event's theme will be "For a Successful Asia BCH Family".

Discussions were focused on the assistance that must be given countries that have yet to submit their 3rd National Report during the China-ASEAN Workshop in September 2016 in Nanjing, China.

To date the following have been the accomplishments of the ICC:

1. Organized a side event entitled "For a Successful Asia BCH Family" to be showcased at the COPMOP8 in Cancun, Mexico in December 2016. The Asia BCH Family's achievements and lessons learned.

2. Supported Nanjing Institute of Environmental Sciences under Ministry of Environmental Protection, the People's Republic of China in organizing a training on risk assessment, LMO detection, and the BCH in September 2016.
3. Supported Asian countries to prepare a draft regional project proposal aiming to protect biodiversity and enhance food security.
4. Assisted Asian countries to finalize the CPB Third National Report before MOP-8.
5. Created a virtual forum at the BCH Central Portal which aims to support countries experiencing challenges in submitting their National Reports or other compliance issues.
6. Prepared a brochure to interconnect Biosafety to Sustainable Development Goals and Biodiversity (AICHI Targets) to be distributed at MOP-8.
7. Disseminated a brochure describing the Asia BCH Family initiative as a tool to promote BCH sustainability and enhance regional compliance with the CPB.

The following served as the resource speakers/presenters during the side event:

- Dr. Ho Min Jang – Background of Asia BCH Family
- Mr. Letchumanan Ramatha – Roadmap as enhancer of regional cooperation to improve compliance
- Prof. Wang Changyong – China Support to the Asia BCH Roadmap
- Ms. Julieta Fe Estacio – Road Map coordination
- Ms. Ileana Lopez – Building Self-Sustainability, Application in other Environmental Matters

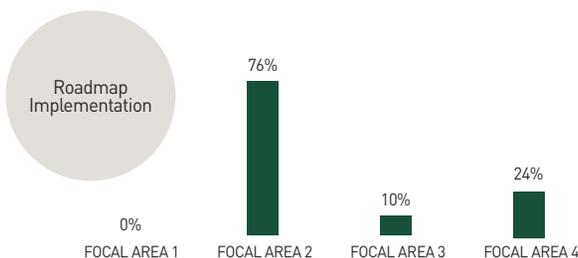


Timeline:

Meeting	Place/Date	No. of Participants	No. of BCH NFPs
1st sub-regional workshop	Daejeon, Republic of Korea, December, 2008	25	15
2nd sub-regional workshop	Daejeon, Republic of Korea, October, 2011	28	13
3rd sub-regional workshop	Siem Reap, Cambodia, November, 2013	36	13
COP-MOP 7	Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea, September - October, 2014	10	3
Ad Hoc Experts' Meeting	Phnom Penh, Cambodia, July, 2015	41	22
4th subregional workshop	Nanjing, P.R. of China, November, 2015	11	4
Coordination Meeting	Manila, Philippines, April, 2016	9	2
Follow up meeting	Seoul, Republic of Korea, July, 2016	100	
Side Event-Asia BCH Family	Cancun, Mexico, December, 2016		

ABF Portal

This portal is developed to create a network for Asia BCH Family countries to enhance the utilization of BCH, to improve the CPB implementation level, and to implement the roadmap. Furthermore, it will be provided to the Asia BCH Family countries for the continuous preservation of biological diversity and the promotion of safe usage for LMOs through close communication.



One for Biosafety!

The portal will be leveraged to create a network for Asia BCH Family countries to enhance the utilization of BCH, to improve the CPB implementation level, and to implement the roadmap.

<http://www.asiabchfamily.org>

Lessons Learned:

1. Building a regional network of collaboration is a long process that requires shared vision, leadership, trust, commitment, and resources.
2. Camaraderie, respect, unconditional commitment, and hard work from team members are essential to maintain alive the networking spirit.
3. Overall the most important is the generous, selfless, and self-giving spirit to create the conditions for all the member states to attain sustainable development at regional level.