



## Global Environment Facility

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### UNEP'S RESPONSE TO "EVALUATION OF GEF SUPPORT FOR BIOSAFETY" BY THE GEF EVALUATION OFFICE

## Table of Contents

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Response by UNEP to the OME Evaluation ..... | 1 |
| Regional Cooperation .....                   | 2 |
| Legal aspects .....                          | 2 |
| Other Issues.....                            | 3 |
| UNEP Toolkit .....                           | 4 |
| Advice Provided by External Experts.....     | 4 |
| Conclusion .....                             | 4 |

1. The GEF Council, at its meeting in November 2000, approved an “Initial strategy to assist countries to prepare for the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol”. At its November 2004 meeting, the GEF Council requested that the GEF Office of Monitoring and Evaluation undertake an evaluation of all activities financed under the Initial strategy. The GEF Office of Monitoring and Evaluation presented a draft of the evaluation on GEF’s support to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the GEF Council during its meeting held on November 2005 and the final version has been posted on the website as: [Doc.GEF/ME/C.27/Inf.1/Rev.1](#).

2. The GEF Council in June 2005 further requested UNEP to report back in May 2006 on the steps it has taken to incorporate agreed recommendations from the biosafety evaluation into its biosafety portfolio of activities. (See Para. 29 of Joint Summary of the Chairs). The text below is a response by UNEP to that June 2005 Council request. It describes the measures UNEP has already put in place during the interim approach and how it plans to apply these measures under the new Biosafety strategy for Biosafety, on its approval.

### **Response by UNEP to the OME Evaluation**

3. The evaluation carried out by the OME has provided valuable information and lessons for current and future GEF support for building capacity to develop and implement national biosafety frameworks. In this light, the GEF Council requested UNEP to prepare a response to the GEF OME evaluation that would detail how UNEP will incorporate the results of the evaluation into its current and future activities.

4. UNEP has prepared a response to the overall recommendations and to other sections in the text where the findings are relevant for the work of UNEP in order to describe how the conclusions and recommendations are taken into account in its present and future work.

### **Recommendation 1: Future assistance should be better planned and customized to each participating country.**

5. The development project was the first major biosafety intervention of the GEF in participating countries and started from an almost zero baseline in most countries. UNEP now has 4 years of experience with biosafety issues in over 120 countries. This broad experience –of both national conditions and global trends in biosafety good practice - is being utilized to support countries in the preparation of all new implementation projects. New NBF Implementation projects are drafted by countries with help from UNEP, especially with regard to final presentation to GEF. This allows each country to determine its own priorities in line with its own situation and the results of stocktaking at the end of its NBF Development Project.

6. UNEP is also using adaptive management techniques to customize support for the remaining countries in the current NBF development project, where resource constraints permit. Lower baseline countries, in particular, need to, and are now able to receive more assistance from the Regional Coordinators (RCs) now that more than 50% of countries have already finished their NBFs.

## Regional Cooperation

7. UNEP is developing regional activities in line with requests and needs of countries to complement activities that will be carried out at national level.

8. Many developing countries, however, still see national level implementation of NBFs as an essential “stepping stone” to regional harmonization, even when discussions at supra-national level are ongoing. For example, ECOWAS ministers agreed a reasonable delay between the two agreements, in June 2005, when they agreed to “*develop national biosafety policies and legislation by July 1, 2006 at the latest, in order to facilitate the harmonization of biosafety regulations in West Africa by 2008*”. Similar discussions and political commitments are emerging in other region of Africa and the Caribbean and Pacific.

9. UNEP is working with countries to respond to these needs and has already submitted five hybrid national-regional concepts to the GEF in 2005. Each one includes a national level implementation component for each country, plus a set of supra-national activities that would be decided on by the participant countries. This ensures that the progression towards regional collaboration and harmonization is country-driven and thus likely to be sustainable in the long-term.

### **Recommendation 2: The GEF should consider providing longer term training for building and sustaining specialist capacity in risk assessment and risk management.**

10. UNEP agrees on the need to further build biosafety capacity and improve the sustainability of capacity built through increases in the depth and length of training in specialist areas of biosafety; UNEP is working with countries to integrate this aspect into their own biosafety development plans. In the current and planned implementation projects, training of up to 2 weeks is already incorporated into projects for areas such as risk assessment and risk management (RA/RM). Longer-term training for RA/RM, plus enforcement, monitoring, detection, etc may also be needed for greater sustainability of biosafety systems. UNEP will include such training into future projects, as appropriate and to the extent that any new biosafety strategy<sup>1</sup> and resources allow, and will actively explore possibilities of combined training with other bilateral donors/agencies.

## Legal aspects

11. The legal reviews, carried out by countries under the NBF Development project, and the GEF OME evaluation have both identified some areas of weakness in the draft regulatory systems of some draft NBFs. These insights will be used in making adjustments and adaptive management to current projects. The reviews and insights will also help UNEP and countries in carrying out effective stocktaking and planning for the new implementation projects. In addition, UNEP plans to put in place the relevant legal expertise within the team, provided resources become available.

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<sup>1</sup> A draft new biosafety strategy is presented at the June 2006 GEF council meeting as doc GEF/C.28/5.

**Recommendation 3: The GEF should continue to emphasize awareness-raising and public participation issues, including support to the BCH.**

12. Public awareness raising, public consultation and information sharing have, in fact, been emphasized in all UNEP biosafety projects and the Regional Coordinators (RCs) have provided considerable support to this area of the CPB, especially considering that this is an entirely new area for many countries. *UNEP has also strongly urged, in all projects, that both the private and public sectors, as well as NGOs should be represented in national project committees and this will remain a firm policy for the implementation projects. Following on from the evaluation, this aspect will be pushed even harder in any future implementation project.*

13. UNEP will also continue to promote awareness raising, public consultation and information sharing, through sharing of good practices and by supporting countries to fulfill all their national obligations under CPB decisions on public consultation and information sharing. However, UNEP is sensitive to the wide range of socio-economic baselines for such activities within different countries, and recognizes that of the pace of growth in public awareness and participation for biosafety may differ between regions/countries.

**Recommendation 4: The GEF should work toward a higher degree of donor and partner collaboration and other cost-sharing schemes at the global and national levels.**

14. UNEP has significantly increased the effort being put into discussions and negotiations with sub-regional organizations, international organizations and donors for collaboration and new sources of funding. Examples of interested new partners are: FAO, ICARDA, ECOWAS, CARICOM, IICA, NEPAD, EU, bilateral donors, etc. A number of subregional organizations are interested in collaboration and are considering support for such actions, e.g. Caribbean Development Bank, IICA, ICARDA. Funding is also being sought by UNEP from a range of interested donors for support to subregional consultations for countries moving into implementation, in order to cover the needs for regional stocktaking and networking of countries and relevant organizations.

**Other Issues**

*The Biosafety Clearing-House*

15. It was not possible for the NBF development project to include activities to ensure country consistency with the BCH due to timing, constraints on the budget and time and lack of training materials. Action was also complicated by the need to wait for the BCH to be formally agreed in COP/MOP1 before GEF capacity building could commence, as stated in the GEF initial strategy. Most countries only started to make the nominations necessary to determine roles and responsibilities on the BCH in 2003. Many countries did not make BCH nominations until their draft NBF had been prepared because these decisions were dependent upon the decision-making apparatus that was being set up as part of the drafting of the NBF. In the interim, however, many countries, have taken the practical step of putting much information on websites that they built as part of the development project, and this has been seen to be a useful step.

16. Since 2003, the BCH project, in collaboration with the NBF project, has been working to ensure consistency with the global BCH, and the two teams are complementing each other's work. The number of laws and applications and experts being posted on the BCH is now rising steadily.

17. In the demonstration phase of implementation projects, most of the twelve countries, supported by UNEP, UNDP or WB have worked with the UNEP BCH team of Regional Advisers to assist with the establishment of national, operational BCHs. Since 2003/2004, BCH training materials have been developed, in collaboration with the CBD, and are now made widely available on the website and used as widely. It is expected that the consistency of countries with the BCH will increase as more countries join the BCH project and fully use the available training materials and advisory support.

### **UNEP Toolkit**

18. The original development toolkit modules have been well received by most users and there is already a demand for similar toolkits to cover the more complex areas of NBF implementation. It is, therefore, intended to follow the Development Phase toolkit with a toolkit for Implementation, but this will depend on relevant levels of supra-national resources being made available.

19. UNEP also expects to receive funding to produce a review of good practices and lessons learnt on how to tackle socio-economic issues to further support countries, and this will be added to the toolkits available and translated to the UN languages.

### **Advice Provided by External Experts**

20. Countries have been directly responsible for the choice of the consultant to carry out work under the NBF Development Project, although UNEP has provided advice on the choice and exercised quality control in a few instances. UNEP intends to raise the quality of the peer reviews by making available a wider range of recognized experts from the regions and outside the regions to assist countries.

### **Conclusion**

21. UNEP is pleased that the evaluation carried out by GEF OME has recognized the useful work carried out over the last four years in UNEP's three interlinked capacity building projects. The evaluation has indicated areas for further improvement and UNEP hopes the responses described above will allow UNEP to continue to provide high quality professional and administrative support to countries that choose to request and endorse GEF capacity building assistance for NBF implementation at either national or regional level, both in the GEF-4 under the RAF, as well as through other bilateral capacity-building support.