



## Training Workshop on Negotiation Skills and Techniques for National Focal Points of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety



Representatives from 31 AU Member States, who are mainly national focal points of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety attended the training

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The African Union's Department of Human Resources Science and Technology (HRST) and the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency's African Biosafety Network of Expertise program (AU-NEPAD-ABNE), in partnership with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) organized a training Workshop on Negotiation Skills and Techniques from 5-6 September, 2018 in Addis Ababa.

This training workshop was in preparation for the upcoming Ninth Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) serving as the meeting



*From left to right: Dr Jeremy Ouedraogo, Director of AU-NEPAD-ABNE, Dr Mahama Ouedraogo Director of AU-HRST and Dr. Joshua N. Weiss, Co-founder of the Global*

of the parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP 9) in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt from November 17<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

In his opening remarks, Dr Mahama Ouedraogo, Director of AU-HRST, affirmed that “this training workshop is being organized at a critical time, as COP/MOP 9 is nearing and as this time the COP/MOP is happening on our continent. It is important for African delegates to get the necessary skills to be able to make useful contributions on the part of Africa”.

Representatives from thirty-one (31) AU Member States who are mainly national focal points of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety attended the training. It was facilitated by Mr. Rabih El-Haddad, Manager of the Multilateral Diplomacy Programme at UNITAR and Dr. Joshua N. Weiss, Co-founder of the Global Negotiation Initiative at Harvard University and Senior Fellow at the

Harvard Negotiation Project. The training covered key elements of negotiations skills and techniques, including the mindset of a successful negotiator, negotiation myths and barriers, introduction to two models of negotiation (positional approach and collaborative framework), challenging negotiation dynamic, and toolkit for efficient negotiations. In addition to formal presentations, participants were taken through various practical exercises that contributed to effectively improve their understanding of negotiations art in a concrete setting.

At the end of the training, participants expressly thanked AU-HRST, AU-NEPAD-ABNE and UNITAR for putting together their efforts to make this training possible to enhance the capacity of such a significant number of African delegates to the upcoming COP/MOP 9 in Egypt.

### **Some participants share their views on the training workshop**

#### **Rigobert Ntep, Focal Point of the Cartagena Protocol on biosafety, Cameroon**

“This important meeting helped us prepare for the next COP-MOP which will take place in Egypt. One of the weaknesses of the African group at such meetings was the lack of preparation. This time, with NEPAD and AU support, we are addressing the issue properly and this is a very good initiative. We needed more time for the meeting but we are also aware of the budget issues. However, beyond the preparation, we also need to make sure that Africa focal points will be present in Egypt to defend not only the national positions but also those of the continent.”



**Dr. Lilian Chimphepo, National Focal Point of the Cartagena Protocol on biosafety, Malawi**

“The two-day training was very informative. It has built our capacity and skills on how to negotiate and we will be able to face the other parties and what their interests are and how we can together collaborate to come up with a common approach.”



**Dr. Douglas Watuku Miano, University of Nairobi, Kenya**

“This was a very good training. We were not aware of some aspects of aspects of negotiations that go behind the scenes but now we know that when the talks are going during COP-MOP, we should not take things for granted. We should get the information first and allocate 70% of our time to the meeting preparation and when we go for negotiations we can manage our emotions and negotiate from a point of information”



## Coordination Meeting of the African Group for the Ninth COP-MOP

A one-day African Group Coordination meeting was organized by the African Union’s Department of Human Resources Science and Technology (HRST) and the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency’s African Biosafety Network of Expertise program (AU-NEPAD-ABNE). The coordination meeting was in preparation for the upcoming Ninth Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) serving as the meeting of the parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP 9) in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt from November 17<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

In his welcome remarks, the Head of AU-NEPAD-ABNE, Dr. Jeremy T. Ouedraogo, expressed his appreciation for the commitment of African negotiators over the years towards advancing the interests of the continent



*Ms Wadzanayi Patience Mandivenyi from South Africa (in the middle) was elected to chair the meeting. On the high table were also Dr. Jeremy Ouedraogo, Director of AU-NEPAD-ABNE (on left), Mr. Sam Timpo from AU-NEPAD-ABNE and Ms. Mahlet Teshome Kebede from AU-HRST.*

during international negotiations and urged participants to not only represent the interests of their countries but also speak with one voice for Africa.

Representatives from thirty-one (31) AU Member States who are national focal points of the Biosafety Protocol attended the meeting. The negotiators representing the African region discussed the agenda items of the COP-MOP 9 towards an African position setting. Among the key issues that the group focused on were risk assessment and risk management of living modified organisms, issues of compliance with the Protocol and socio-economic considerations vis-a-vis new and emerging technologies that impact the

implementation of the Biosafety Protocol. Exchange of experiences on national reports, meeting obligations to the Biosafety Clearing-House and challenges faced as a result of allocation of financial resources to biosafety by the funding mechanism of the CBD were also considered. Recommendations to the Secretariat of the African Group (the AUC and the NEPAD Agency) regarding support on specific coordination priorities of the Group leading up to COP-MOP 9 and suggested elements for draft decisions on some agenda items were proposed. The meeting was concluded after discussing and agreeing on the next steps to be taken at the level of each constituency.

## First International Biosafety Short Course implemented in Nigeria

NEPAD Agency ABNE in partnership with the National Biosafety Management Agency of Nigeria (NBMA), the Godfrey Okoye University (GOU), Michigan State University (MSU) and the Program for Biosafety Systems (PBS), successfully implemented an international biosafety short course at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, Nigeria, from 16 – 18 July, 2018.



From left to right are Prof. Edwin Onyeneje, Dr. Jeremy T. Ouedraogo, Prof. Karim Maredia, and Dr Rufus Ebegba during the opening ceremony.

Participants were drawn from various relevant stakeholder institutions such as biotechnology and biosafety agencies, academia and research institutions, as well as the media and women groups.

The main objective of this short course was to empower important stakeholders with current information on the safe management of biotechnology for socio-economic development. It also sought to provide a platform for networking among key actors to foster inter-agency collaborations and to increase awareness among key actors on their role, and the significance of having functional regulatory systems for biotechnology.

Official welcome and opening remarks were given by Prof. Edwin Onyeneje, Deputy Vice Chancellor of GOUni; Dr Rufus Ebegba, Director General of NBMA; Prof. Karim Maredia, Director of the World Technology Access Program at MSU; Dr Mathew Dore, Nigeria Country Leader for PBS; Dr. Ojuolape Solanke, West African Health Organization (WAHO); Dr. Jeremy T.Ouedraogo, Director of NEPAD Agency ABNE; Prof. Uche Ebe, Enugu State Commissioner for Education; and Prof. Engr. Patrick E. Ikpenwa, Enugu State Commissioner for Science and Technology.

All interveners welcomed participants to the biosafety short course and congratulated GOUni for this important feat. Prof. Edwin Onyeneje said that GOUni was particularly honored to host such an important event and thanked all partners who contributed to make this happen. Dr Jeremy Ouedraogo highlighted that “through this activity, the NEPAD Agency would

like to reiterate its commitment to continue supporting Nigeria to build a functional biosafety regulatory system and build human capacity of high quality and thus fulfill the mandate of the ABNE.” Prof Engr. Patrick E. Ikpenwa, officially declared the short course open and affirmed, on behalf of his Excellency, Rt. Hon. Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, Governor of Enugu State, “I wish to say that Enugu State is open to partnerships in this area and wish you a successful implementation of this program”.

Later in the course of the day, Rev. Fr. Prof. Christian Anieke, Vice Chancellor of GOUni, who had been unavoidably absent at the opening ceremony, welcomed all participants, prayed for the success of the short course. He was well pleased that it was hosted by the University. He further stated, “I am still wondering what brought us into this field but maybe the hand of God brought us into this. Anything that has to do with biology has always been my interest”.

“I am very happy the short course has taken up and is happening at GOUni for the first time in Enugu State and for the first time in Nigeria. Nigeria needs this kind of program, not for only training but also new ideas. So note that I, as Vice Chancellor of this University, am hundred per cent behind you in this course”, he added.

The short course was facilitated by NEPAD ABNE and Nigerian experts in the biosafety sector. Key topics addressed in the course encompassed an introduction to modern biotechnology and biosafety, myths and misconceptions about GMOs and how they are addressed, national and international frameworks for regulating biotechnology, public participation in



Group picture of participants

biosafety processes, and biosafety resources and experience sharing.

Time was also allowed for participants to make contributions and ask questions. Food safety issues were particularly raised and experts reassured the audience that available scientific evidence shows that GM food is as safe as its conventional counterpart. Participants particularly appreciated the organizers for

such an initiative, which is a real eye-opener on biotechnology and biosafety. The sustainability of such a training program was also emphasized and participants suggested that relevant stakeholders help to develop innovative ways of reaching out to all segments of the population from school children to farmers and the academia who are not familiar with modern biotechnology and biosafety.

## Establishment of the West Africa Integrated Vector Management Platform

Representatives from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) member states, met from 15 – 17 August, 2017, in Accra, Ghana, for the establishment of the West Africa Integrated Vector Management (WA-IVM) Programme. After a series of consultative workshops, this meeting was the final stage for the validation of the programme. After a series of consultative workshops, this meeting was the final stage for the validation of the programme. The key objective of this meeting was to agree on the scope and approach for rolling out the WA-IVM programme with malaria as pathfinder disease and gene drive as pathfinder technology. The meeting also sought to identify the needs and requirements of regulators that would facilitate the operationalization of the IVM programme in the ECOWAS region. It also aimed at determining a governance structure for

the programme and aimed at considering for adoption a five year workplan for the programme. 42 representatives, mainly CEOs for Food and Drugs Authorities, and National biosafety Agencies as well as from Ethics Committees of the 15 ECOWAS countries took part in the meeting.

It was officially opened by Dr Rufus Ebegba, Director General of Nigeria National Biosafety Management Agency and representing his country that chairs ECOWAS. He stated that “science and technology are the major drivers of economic change and if there are no applications for science and technology, the African continent will not make any significant progress.”

Mrs Mimi Darko, CEO of Ghana Food and Drug Authority and Mr. Eric Okoree, CEO the Ghana



From left to right; Mrs Mimi Darko, Dr Jeremy Ouedraogo, Mr Eric Okoree, Dr Rufus Ebegba, Dr Raj Long and Dr Tete Amouh during the opening ceremony

National Biosafety Agency, welcomed participants and wished that the different discussions contribute to fine-tune the IVM programme for a smooth and effective implementation on the ground.

Dr Tete Amouh, Officer in charge of Communicable Disease at the West Africa Health Organization (WAHO), said that “in the work we are doing here, we have to keep in mind that it is to help millions of people in the West Africa region, and beyond that, the whole African continent.”

Dr Jeremy Ouedraogo, Director of the NEPAD Agency West Africa Regional Office in Dakar, also welcomed participants, on behalf of NEPAD Agency CEO and affirmed that “the use of emerging technologies was a strong recommendation of the African Union Ministers of Health in addition to other existing technologies for malaria eradication in Africa. How to effectively implement this if the technical actors for the use of this technologies have no proper consultation framework? The integrated approach seems therefore the best for a rational and concerted use and implementation of all these techniques and technologies.”

During the meeting, presentations were made on various topics pertaining to the programme, especially the burden of communicable diseases in the West Africa region, the risks/benefits in disease management, an overview of the WA-IVM programme, the tools and approaches in vector control, the existing regional collaborations in vector control, the recommendations of the African Union High Panel on Emerging Technologies. The meeting also enabled participants to agree on the key components of the WA-IVM programme, including the programme scope and approach, the stakeholder mapping, the roles the health and environment regulators, the roles of ethics committees, the governance structure, training curriculum, the programme workplan and development of guidelines.

From the discussions, it was pointed out that despite the current malaria control strategies going on in West African countries, there is still an increase of malaria incidences in many West African countries. Therefore, there is a clear need to use emerging technologies like the gene drive to contribute to make a significant progress towards eliminating



Group picture of participants

malaria by 2030 in the ECOWAS region.

The meeting also came up with 10 important resolutions, ranging from capacity strengthening for stakeholders and technical working groups to the governance structure adopted for the operationalization of the programme. Among other

resolutions are also the need for participants to strengthen their national IVM programmes which will serve as a foundation for the regional platform; the importance of joint sessions between technology developers and regulators in order to enhance understanding of each other’s mode of operation and also the science behind the technology; and the

need for a communication plan and messaging about the programme and technologies being dealt with. During the closing ceremony, the meeting report was amended and adopted by all participants. The programme secretariat, run by WAHO and NEPAD Agency, will finalize editing of the documents annexed to this report and circulate to the delegates.

## National Seminar on the Implementation of the Biosafety Regulation on the Management of GMOs in Mozambique

The Ministry of Science and Technology, Higher Education and Professional Technicians (MCTESTP), organized National workshops on the Implementation of the Biosafety Regulation on the Management of Genetically Modified Organisms in Mozambique, from 11 – 12 July, 2018, in Maputo and the Minister invited NEPAD Agency African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE) to bring in continental perspectives from a neutral point of view into the discussion with all the stakeholders.



**Group picture of participants: H.E. Prof. Doutor Eng. Jorge Olivio Penicela Nhambiu, Minister of Science and Technology, Higher Education and Professional Technicians (standing fourth from the left-hand side).**

The objective of these two-in-one workshop was to engage all the stakeholder in a discussion on the issue of the Biosafety Decree and its implication for the Mozambican and a forum to officially inaugurate GIB's with all the ministries involved with the mandate as stipulated by the Decree. It was also a platform for reflection on the implementation of the Biosafety Regulation on the Management of Genetically Modified Organisms.

The meeting was opened by H.E. Prof. Doutor Eng.

Jorge Olivio Penicela Nhambiu, Minister of Science and Technology, Higher Education and Professional Technicians. In his opening remarks, Prof. Nhambiu expressed his “sincere thanks to NEPAD Agency ABNE for the efforts to support the establishment of functional national biosafety system in Mozambique through technical support.” He further stated that “Biotechnology is an area of great potential for solving the various challenges of modern society and rural communities, especially in the area of Agriculture.



Therefore, recognizing the potential that this component has, together with the need to regulate its use, after formalizing different inherent legislation, the Biosafety Regulation on the Management of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) was approved.”

The development and use of GMOs in the country are regulated by Decree No. 6/2007 of 25 April 2007 revised by Decree 71/2014 of 28 November 2014. This Decree peculiarly details the combined role of different ministries in the nomination of the Inter-Institutional Biosafety Group (GIIBS) membership, which is the national regulatory body to advise the competent authority.

It was in this context that the Ministry of Science and Technology, Higher Education and Professional Technicians (MCTESTP) requested a technical support

from NEPAD Agency ABNE, under the MoU signed with the competent authority for capacity building of GIIBS in the implementation of its activities.

During these meeting, participants were able to identify gaps in the Decree, and suggestions of correct languages were proposed for adoption. As an outcome of the meeting, the Minister of Science and Technology, Higher Education and Professional Technicians has taken clear measures for a full operationalization of GIIBS in collaboration with the other ministries involved. NEPAD Agency ABNE, in line with its mandate to contribute to the implementation of functional biosafety regulatory systems in the continent, will continue to provide the necessary technical support to Mozambique for the country to safely harness science, technology and innovation opportunities for its development.

## Experience Sharing Workshop on Biosafety Decision Making Processes in Kenya

NEPAD Agency ABNE, in partnership with Biosafety key stakeholders in Kenya, organized an experience sharing workshop on the harmonization of the biosafety decision making processes in Kenya from August 28 to 29, 2018 in Nairobi. The objective of this meeting was to develop a single roadmap for commercialization of Bt cotton in Kenya showing the roles to be played by different partners- National Biosafety Authority (NBA), National Performance Trial Committee (NPTC) and National Variety Release Committee (NVRC). The workshop was



Group picture of participants

attended by 24 people from NPTC, NVRC, NBA and The Kenya Government Cotton Task Force.

During the meeting ABNE POs shared experiences from Ethiopia, Malawi and Burkina Faso, countries that are doing NPT or have completed NPT and commercialized biotechnology cotton. Participants were able to harmonize the roles in decision making by the various specialized institutions from event approval to the release of essentially derived plant varieties. They developed a decision-making

pathway to handle future testing, evaluation and commercial release of essentially derived varieties and a roadmap for the National Performance Testing and Commercialization of Bt Cotton.

ABNE will continue to support Kenya in building functional biosafety regulatory systems, especially through experience sharing meetings and seeing-is-believing study tours, especially in other African countries.

## Stakeholder meeting on Aflatoxin-free groundnuts for Senegal & West Africa

As a part of NEPAD-MSU biotechnology/biosafety study tour, a high-level delegation from four countries in Africa (Senegal, Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Zambia) visited ICRISAT headquarters in Patancheru, India, in February, 2018. During this visit, the group met and interacted with the scientific and management group at ICRISAT and expressed strong interest to partner with ICRISAT to access to the aflatoxin-free technology, for its deployment in Africa.

ICRISAT and its collaborators have successfully developed groundnut transgenics resistant to aflatoxin using a double defense approach, involving over expression of antimicrobial peptide, defensin, from alfalfa that inhibits



Part of participants during the field visit in Thies.

fungal growth, and another utilizing host-induced gene silencing (HIGS) using small siRNA's that interfere with the fungal toxin production pathway making it incapable of aflatoxin accumulation. The inheritance of the transgene has been established and the trait is stable and heritable.

As a follow-up to this request, it was decided to hold a stakeholder meeting in Senegal to share information on this technology and identify key partners for project formulation. Through the support from the Government of Senegal, NEPAD agency, MSU and ICRISAT organized a 3-day workshop in Dakar, from 2 – 4 September, 2018.

The stakeholder group included 12 scientists, regulators, farmer association representatives, academia and representatives from ICRISAT, NEPAD agency and MSU. Presentations and brain storming sessions were held on the technologies, on local varieties and production systems including institutional capacities, and on food safety and socioeconomic aspects of aflatoxin. Participants also visited the regional center for resilience to drought of the Senegal Institute of Agricultural

Research (ISRA-CERAAS) in Thies, near Dakar. The stakeholder group unanimously recognized that this technology that makes groundnuts free from aflatoxin contamination is very important for Senegal and other West African countries, to enhance food and nutrition security, food safety as well as regional and international groundnut trade.

A roadmap was agreed upon after deliberations during the workshop. A pronged strategy was recommended for technology development and deployment, with a strong focus on capacity building including stewardship and biosafety compliance measures. Also, considering that aflatoxin is widespread in different production systems across West Africa, a regional approach will be considered during the project formulation process.

## High level meeting with Parliamentarians on Bt cotton variety registration in Malawi

NEPAD Agency ABNE, in collaboration with The Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture in Malawi, organized a high level meeting on the implementation of biotechnology and biosafety in Malawi from 11-12 September 2018. The meeting was attended by 15 participants, mainly Parliamentarians and government officials. The meeting was opened by the Chair of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Agriculture.

During the meeting presentations were made by representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture on the delay in registration and release for cultivation of the Bt cotton varieties, and on the results of Bt cotton

national performance trials (NPTs). NEPAD Agency ABNE made a presentation on experiences of Bt cotton technology elsewhere in the world contrasting and comparing with the yield gains attained in trials in Malawi.

The presentations were followed by a session of discussion with Honourable Parliamentarians. These discussions particularly highlighted the logic of dragging the process and the risk of the technology spilling out because of its appeal to the users. From the discussions, it was decided that all the results of the Bt cotton field trials in Malawi will be summarized and submitted the competent authority for the



Group picture of participants

registration and release for cultivation of the seeds.

The Standing Committee commended NEPAD Agency ABNE for the technical support provided to improve the functionality of the biosafety regulatory systems in Malawi. They requested NEPAD ABNE's support to the members of the committee especially with opportunities such as experience sharing visits.

This meeting was a follow-up of a high-level policy dialogue mission led by Prof. Aggrey Ambali, NEPAD's Head of ISTI and accompanied by Dr Jeremy Ouedraogo, Director of ABNE and Dr Wolde Sinebo, ABNE Senior PO from 22-24 July 2018 in Lilongwe.

The team had met important officials in Malawi, including Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Parliamentary Standing Committee for Agriculture, senior government officials at the Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Research Services and the Environmental Affairs Department. The purpose of this meeting was to share information with Malawi policy and decision makers on the status of biotechnology and biosafety in the country and agree on a way forward to improve the biosafety decision making processes. After fruitful discussions officials it was agreed that the meeting of key stakeholders in the Bt cotton technology chain be convened in September.

## Upcoming events

- **14 – 20 October**; Gene Drive Regulatory Consultative Workshop and Training of Regulators, Scientists and capacity building Experts on basics of vector control strategies, Dakar, Senegal
- **18 – 23 October**; International Workshop on Wolbachia-based Dengue and malaria Control, Guangzhou, China
- **20 – 24 October**; Prepare the Rwanda's participation at the COP-MOP as chair of the African group of negotiators and Plan for ABNE's support in building the national biosafety system, Kigali, Rwanda
- **26 – 27 October**; Capacity Building Activities for Regulators and their Visit to Maktopora, the CFT site for the WEMA project, Dodoma, Tanzania
- **28 – 31 October**; Information sharing for sensitization of the Senegalese MPs in view of the revision of the biosafety law, Dakar, Senegal
- **30 Oct – 2 Nov**; Training meeting for African Biosafety Lawyers, Nairobi, Kenya
- **4 – 8 November**; Review guidelines on Gene drive technology regulation and Organize a consultative meeting for the Heads of the National Biosafety Agencies and Biosafety Committees on the regional Biosafety Governance structure (as per their recommendations), Accra, Ghana
- **6 November**; Sensitization and Awareness creation workshop for Malawi lawyers on Biosafety matters; Lilongwe, Malawi.
- **10 – 29 November**; Organize Pre-COP MOP 9 meeting for the African Group of Negotiators on issues of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its Protocols and attend COP 14/MOP 9/MOP 3 meetings, Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt
- **Date TBC**; Participation to the Drafting team, the Expert and Ministerial meetings on the ECOWAS harmonization process, Abuja, Nigeria
- **8 – 14 December**; Present Technical and Final Report for 2018, Present Work Plan and budget for FY 2019, Seattle, USA.



### NEPAD Agency – African Biosafety Network of Expertise

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