

**Article 18 Technical and scientific co-operation**

252. What is the relative priority afforded to implementation of this Article and the associated decisions by your country?							
a) High		b) Medium	X	c) Low			
253. To what extent are the resources available adequate for meeting the obligations and recommendations made?							
a) Good		b) Adequate	X	c) Limiting		d) Severely limiting	
Further comments on relative priority and on availability of resources							

254. Has your country taken measures to promote international technical and scientific co-operation in the field of conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity (18(1))?	
a) no measures	
b) some measures in place	X
c) potential measures under review	
d) comprehensive measures in place	
255. Do the measures taken to promote co-operation with other Contracting Parties in the implementation of the Convention pay special attention to the development and strengthening of national capabilities by means of human resources development and institution building (18(2))?	
a) no	
b) yes - limited extent	
c) yes - significant extent	X
256. Has your country encouraged and developed methods of co-operation for the development and use of technologies, including indigenous and traditional technologies, in pursuance of the objectives of this Convention (18(4))?	
a) no	
b) early stages of development	X
c) advanced stages of development	
d) methods in place	

257. Does such co-operation include the training of personnel and exchange of experts (18(4))?	
a) no	
b) yes - limited extent	
c) yes - significant extent	X
258. Has your country promoted the establishment of joint research programmes and joint ventures for the development of technologies relevant to the objectives of the Convention (18(5))?	
a) no	
b) yes - limited extent	X
c) yes - significant extent	

**Decision II/3, Decision III/4 and Decision IV/2. Clearing House Mechanism**

259. Is your country co-operating in the development and operation of the Clearing House Mechanism?	
a) no	
b) yes	X
260. Is your country helping to develop national capabilities through exchanging and disseminating information on experiences and lessons learned in implementing the Convention?	
a) no	
b) yes - limited extent	
c) yes - significant extent	X
261. Has your country designated a national focal point for the CHM?	
a) no	
b) yes	X
262. Is your country providing resources for the development and implementation of the Clearing-House Mechanism?	
a) no	
b) yes, at the national level	
c) yes, at national and international levels	X
263. Is your country facilitating and participating in workshops and other expert meetings to further the development of the CHM at international levels?	
a) no	
b) participation only	
c) supporting some meetings and participating	X
264. Is your CHM operational	
a) no	
b) under development	

c) yes (please give details below)	X
265. Is your CHM linked to the Internet	
a) no	
b) yes	X
266. Has your country established a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary CHM steering committee or working group at the national level?	
a) no	X
b) yes	

**Decision V/14. Scientific and technical co-operation and the clearinghouse mechanisms (Article 18)**

267. Has your country reviewed the priorities identified in Annex I to the decision, and sought to implement them?	
a) not reviewed	
b) reviewed but not implemented	
c) reviewed and implemented as appropriate	X

**Further comments on implementation of these Articles**

Article 17 (general/249):

- see information on the Belgian Clearing-House Mechanism below (note in relation to question 264).
- Since 1996, Belgium manages the 'Belgian Biosafety Server' (URL: [biosafety.ihe.be](http://biosafety.ihe.be)). This website primarily aims at providing to, and exchanging with, the competent authorities, the scientific community, the private sector, NGOs and the public in general, scientific, technical and legal information on genetically modified organisms. Since 22 June 2001, this website serves as the national Biosafety Clearing-House (Article 20 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety) via the URL: [www.biosafety.be/bch/bch.html](http://www.biosafety.be/bch/bch.html). By doing this, Belgium is probably the first country world-wide to launch a national Biosafety Clearing-House under the Biosafety Protocol.
- The Walloon Region has launched its own biodiversity website, working as a proper Walloon Clearing-House Mechanism website (URL: [mrw.wallonie.be/dgrne/sibw](http://mrw.wallonie.be/dgrne/sibw)) The site is hosted by the Nature, Forests & Wood Research Centre. This website provides a very wide and complete information a.o. on the status of species and habitats in the Region, protected areas, Walloon and European nature conservation legislation, research institutions and universities, institutional and non institutional stakeholders, public awareness and education. It points to interesting links at European and Belgian level such as the Belgian CHM, the Biodiversity Resources in Belgium server, etc. The Walloon Region supports the initiative to use the Belgian CHM website to display information on the implementation of the EU Habitats and Birds Directives in Belgium.
- To provide users with all relevant information concerning biodiversity

research in Belgium (funding sources, research institutions, conferences, experts, etc.), the existing national biodiversity websites (the Belgian Clearing-House Mechanism site and Belnet/BIODIV) are linked and completed by the Belgian Biodiversity Forum ([www.biodiversity.be](http://www.biodiversity.be)). This forum is a portal site centralising, structuring and completing the existing data in order to provide one efficient national information centre on biodiversity research.

- The project BIODIV 'Biodiversity Resources in Belgium' is an inventory of biodiversity resources in Belgium (URL: [www.br.fgov.be/biodiv](http://www.br.fgov.be/biodiv)). It is not limited to the biodiversity of the Belgian territory, but includes all Belgian research, with a.o. a rich tradition in Africa. The inventory comprises (meta)data on specialists (both professional and private), research programs at universities, institutes and elsewhere, collections, botanic gardens, zoos, museums, existing databases and their contents, lists of publications and recommended literature, associations, journals and administrations involved in the study and conservation of the diversity of living organisms in all its aspects, from the genome to the biome level, on a planetary scale. The project BIODIV is a federal initiative, started in 1997. It organises this information in a way to provide a maximum utility for the national and international scientific community, the Belgian government and the general public. BIODIV is constructed as a relational database that can be consulted on the Internet. A search can be carried out to find institutions and specialists on a specific research topic, eventually a short explanation of their research, the institution or laboratory they are working in, ways to contact them. Research items and collections can be found using geographical, taxonomical or other keywords. BIODIV provides an access to Belgian scientific websites and offers scientific news and an agenda of events. Some data collected by Belgian researchers are repatriated as dedicated websites: on African *Coffea* types and on the vegetation of Katanga (Congo). The Belgian research can also be selected by DIVERSITAS categories (Core Programme Element or Special Target Area of Research). BIODIV is also a linked information source to other national and international initiatives such as the B CHM, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, METAFRO, BioCISE.
- At the Royal Museum for Central Africa, a project called METAFRO InfoSys (URL: [metafro.africamuseum.be](http://metafro.africamuseum.be)) was launched at the end of 1997 with the objective to develop an electronic catalogue of information sources - an on-line metadata base - present in Belgium and related to sub-Saharan Africa, namely to Central Africa, including Angola, Burundi and Rwanda. This project aims to improve the access to information related to Central Africa and relevant for research and development, to promote and improve the communication and exchange of information among partners within a special interest network, and to promote and improve the interdisciplinary scientific research for the sustainable development of the targeted region. Identified beneficiaries are research and training institutions, Central African countries, federal administrations, NGOs, the private sector and international organisations such as FAO, UNEP, IUCN, WWF, etc. The launch and first part of the project was financed by the Belgian Federal Office for Scientific, Technical and Cultural Affairs. From 2002 onwards, METAFRO Infosys will be supported by the Belgian Federal Directorate-General for International Co-operation.

- Belgium, via the Federal Office for Scientific, Technical and Cultural Affairs, is one of the founding countries of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) and became a voting participant in GBIF since this project came into being on the 1st March 2001. Belgium will make a financial contribution of 100,000 US\$ per year to the GBIF Secretariat for its core program of activities and will establish a GBIF national node that will provide access to the Belgian biodiversity data. GBIF will be an interoperable network of biodiversity databases and information technology tools that will enable users to navigate and put to use the world's vast quantities of biodiversity information to produce national economic, environmental and social benefits. The purpose of establishing GBIF is to design, implement, co-ordinate, and promote the compilation, linking, standardisation, digitalisation and global dissemination of the world's biodiversity data, within an appropriate framework for property rights and due attribution. GBIF will work in close co-operation with established programmes and organisations that compile, maintain and use biological information resources. The participants, working through GBIF, will establish and support a distributed information system that will enable users to access and utilise vast quantities of new and existing biodiversity information to generate new knowledge, wealth and ecological sustainability. More information about GBIF at [www.gbif.org](http://www.gbif.org)

(250-251, 255) The Directorate-General for International Co-operation of the federal Belgian Government supports the African Biodiversity Information Centre (ABIC) at the Royal Museum for Central Africa. The RMCA has the largest zoological collections from central Africa in the world, and ABIC organises training internships for students from developing countries, with an emphasis on datamining and repatriation of collection information. ABIC engages in co-operation agreements with the source institutions of the students to ensure support for the valorisation of the repatriated information after the training. Internships are individually adapted to meet the needs and requirements of the applicants.

(Article 18) See also all the projects mentioned in the text box after the questions of Article 5 - Co-operation.

Some private companies (see previous text box) have collaborations with several countries providing equipment, new techniques, grants and training.

(257) OSTC is granting research fellowships to post-doc scientists from Central and Eastern European Countries, allowing them to work in Belgian laboratories during 6 to 12 months for the execution of an R&D project. About 5 fellowships per year are involved with biodiversity research.

(258) In the framework of the Earth Observation research programme of the OSTC, several research projects conducted with local agencies for natural resources management in Africa, Indonesia and with international organisations such as the Worldbank/Environment, FAO/FOREST, UNEP, IUCN, WWF International and Oxfam aim to improve remote sensing methods for monitoring and planning purposes (see also Article 7).

Within the frame of bilateral agreements with i.e. China, Poland, Russia, joint research projects are initiated by the OSTC consisting in a transfer of Belgian know-how which has been developed through the OSTC R&D programmes. About 0.4 Mio Euro per year is devoted to biodiversity projects which include the study and conservation of specific groups of micro-organisms in different

provinces and regions of China, the use of remote sensing techniques for monitoring land use changes in Poland, etc.

(263) Belgium participated in, and provided financial support for, the meeting on the Biosafety Clearing-House in Cuba (2001). Belgium also participated in the 'African regional meeting on Biosafety CH and CHM' in Nairobi, Kenya (26-28 February 2001). Furthermore, Belgium participated in and helped with the coordination of the Pan-European workshop 'Building the Clearing House partnership' in Bonn (28-29 September 2001).

(264) On 7 October 1996, the [Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences](http://www.naturalsciences.be/bch-cbd/home.htm), in its quality of Belgian National Focal Point to the Convention on Biological Diversity, launched the Belgian Clearing-House Mechanism (B CHM) on the Internet (URL: [www.naturalsciences.be/bch-cbd/home.htm](http://www.naturalsciences.be/bch-cbd/home.htm)). It was the fifth CHM national website world-wide to be added to the official list of Clearing-Houses by the Secretariat of the Convention. The [Clearing-House Mechanism under the Convention on Biological Diversity](#) is an information sharing mechanism set up to promote and facilitate the scientific and technical co-operation in relation to the three objectives of the Convention. It also plays an important role in developing public awareness on those three objectives.

The CHM operates mainly, but not exclusively, via the Internet and is built up as a structurally decentralised and distributed network of Parties and partners working together to facilitate the implementation of the Convention. It provides a variety of on-line data on the Convention, thematic programmes and cross-cutting issues as well as a direct access to numerous regional, national and supra-national websites.

The main tasks of the B CHM are to:

- provide extensive information on the Convention on Biological Diversity and its implementation in Belgium;
- present information on the status of biodiversity at national level, i.e. species, ecosystems and habitats, *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation, direct and indirect threats, red lists, etc.;
- assist the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans;
- promote scientific and technical co-operation, as well as capacity building among Parties of the Convention;
- raise and promote public awareness and education on biological diversity matters.

Its main services are:

- an internet-based gateway providing: information on the CBD and its implementation process at national level, on-line versions of strategic documents related to the Convention (national reports, strategies and action plans, country study, etc.), a permanent link between the CBD Secretariat and Belgian actors, links to internet-based biodiversity information in Belgium, a selection of relevant links at local, national and international level, a selection of facilities such as an extensive list of abbreviations and a glossary related to the Convention;
- any appropriate non internet-based ways (posters, folders, CD-roms, etc.) to disseminate CBD information and share available experience;
- a partnering role to developing countries by hosting for the time needed their national CHM and by providing training opportunities for CHM national focal points;
- a participation in public awareness actions to promote biodiversity knowledge and education.

The B CHM aims to avoid the duplication of efforts by looking for existing information and providing links to those websites. The B CHM creates its own pages to give added value to the information already available on the Internet, for example by integrating data from the three national regions (Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia) and communities (Flemish-, French- and German-speaking Communities) in order to present them in a coherent structure at national level. The role of the B CHM is also to stimulate actors to share their information and data by making them available on the Internet.