

## **Submission of the Government of Australia**

### **Comments on mechanisms to promote consideration of issues, exchange views and provide guidance on issues requiring clarification arising during ratification and implementation of the Protocol (para 1, recommendation 2/6)**

Australia supports informal liaison and exchanges of view between governments on issues that arise during ratification and implementation of the Protocol. This can take place in bilateral, regional and multilateral contexts. Australia would encourage governments to take advantage of scheduled meetings and visits for this purpose.

Much work is needed to ensure that the Protocol is successfully implemented. A number of key decisions required by the Protocol are yet to be made. The Protocol's main operational element, the Biosafety Clearing House, is yet to be fully implemented. Australia therefore considers that in the short to medium term the ICCP, the Meeting of the Parties after entry into force and the Secretariat should focus efforts on getting these fundamentals in order, in particular those issues which need to be finalised by the first Meeting of Parties to the Protocol. At this stage it would be inappropriate to distract attention from resolving these issues by adding to the existing workload or creating new mechanisms to consider or clarify 'other issues'.

Australia does not consider there to be a need for further intergovernmental clarification of provisions of the Protocol, which were the subject of extended negotiations between governments prior to the Protocol's adoption. It would be problematic if additional work revisited provisions in a way which might unsettle or undermine hard won agreements.

Australia is also concerned about the potential for duplication of work being undertaken by other competent international organisations, including the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the Organisation of International Epizooties.

Accordingly, Australia wishes to reaffirm its bracketing of the list of proposed issues for clarification contained in the ICCP2 decision (that is, categorisation of LMOs, risk assessment and risk management, establishment of harmonised rules for unique identification systems and transboundary movements with non-parties).