

## **Compendium of National Activities**

### **Republic of Korea**

#### **Oversight, Education, Awareness Raising and Adoption and/or Development of Codes of Conduct for Scientists**

The recent revolution in biotechnology has given rise to concerns over the potential risks posed by misuse of advanced biotechnology. Accordingly, with the aim of preventing this misuse, the Republic of Korea has been faithfully implementing its obligations under the Biological Weapons Convention through the enactment of domestic laws and guidelines and, at the same time, by adopting a number of measures in the fields of oversight, education and awareness raising.

In addition to such endeavors on the part of government agencies, there is now increasing recognition in the academic community in the Republic of Korea of the importance of self-regulation in the conduct of research. Although such measures are not sufficient to prevent all potential risks, the Republic of Korea makes every effort to draw up more effective methods to resolve such concerns over abuse of biotechnology. The Republic of Korea expects, further, that various efforts by both the government and academic sectors will promote domestic awareness on the formulation of Codes of Conduct for Scientists in the near future.

Some of the principal measures the Republic of Korea has taken so far in this field are as follows:

- Based on *the Act of Biotechnology Promotion*, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs (MW) presented *the “Guidelines for Experiments Involving Recombinant DNA Molecules”* in 1997 for the purpose of regulating experimental procedures which researchers should follow. Article 17 of these Guidelines stipulates the role and responsibility of the Korea Center for Disease Control and Prevention (the KCDC) in securing biosafety, by raising the issue of preventing ethical problems resulting from misuse of biotechnology.

- The KCDC conducts national certification for Biosafety Level 3 and 4 facilities, and, accordingly, those certified facilities have responsibilities and duties with respect to safe operation and management. Using this certification system, the KCDC fulfills an oversight role in overseeing research facilities which handle high-risk agents.
- The Ministry of Knowledge Economy is working on drawing up an amendment to *the Foreign Trade Act* to include new provisions to control intangible transfer of technology (ITT) following the decision of the Australia Group Plenary Meeting in April 2008. If intangible transfer of technology is controlled and regulated effectively by domestic laws, this would represent a constructive step toward preventing the misuse of biotechnology.
- The Korean Society for Molecular and Cellular Biology established the *Charter of Ethics for Life Science Researchers* (the Code of Ethics) in October 2005. The Code of Ethics places great emphasis on the role of scientific researchers strictly following the global ethical standards of their profession in order to protect human life and the environment. Although this Code does not specifically make reference to biosecurity, prevention of misuse of biological agents, or biological weapons concerns, it represents a meaningful start on the part of the academic community to promote awareness raising among researchers themselves with respect to the potential risks of the misuse of bioscience and biotechnology.
- *The Regulations on the Management of Highly Restricted Laboratories* were amended in April 2006. Through the amended regulations, the National Veterinary Research and Quarantine Service (the NVRQS) has tightened its oversight function on the management of highly restricted laboratories.
- The Ministry of Knowledge Economy, the KCDC, and the NVRQS have offered a variety of training programs, workshops and symposia and have also published newsletters and booklets to enhance public awareness with respect to the potential misuse of bioscience and biotechnology. Additionally, government agencies continue to develop new awareness-raising and outreach programs for the purpose of encouraging the participation of industry and academia.