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INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO MEET IN GERMANY FOR A UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON LIVING MODIFIED ORGANISMS AND BIODIVERSITY

Montreal, 2 May 2008— More than 2,000 delegates, including ministers and representatives from Governments, civil society and business, will meet in Bonn, Germany, from 12 to 16 May 2008, for the fourth meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP). The meeting is expected to review the progress made so far with the implementation of the Protocol and take additional decisions to advance the process. For the first time the proceedings of the meeting will be broadcast live over the Web and can be accessed through the CBD website (www.cbd.int).

Hailed by the Executive Director of UNEP as the legal international instrument of the twenty-first century, the Protocol aims at promoting the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms (LMOs) resulting from modern biotechnology that may have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The Protocol now has 147 Parties and many Governments are accelerating their procedure of accession to this innovative legal international instrument.

One of the main issues on the agenda of this five-day meeting will be the report of the Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts on Liability and Redress, which was established in February 2004 at the first meeting of the Parties. The Group was mandated to elaborate options for elements of international rules and procedures on liability and redress with respect to damage resulting from the transboundary movements of living modified organisms. In Article 27 of the Protocol, Parties agreed to endeavour to complete this process within four years of the first meeting of the Parties.

Other issues to be discussed include the operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House, capacity-building, the roster of experts on biosafety, risk assessment and risk management, as well as handling, transport, packaging and identification of LMO shipments. The agenda also includes items on socio-economic considerations, public awareness and participation and options for implementation of the notification requirement under Article 8.

At this meeting, the Compliance Committee established under the Protocol will also report on the highlights of the general issues of compliance by Parties and the lessons learned on the basis of the information provided by Parties through their first national reports. The Parties are expected to decide on the question of possible measures that may be taken in cases of repeated non-compliance.

Almost five years since the Protocol entered into force, the Parties have adopted more than 40 substantive decisions to guide its implementation. One of the major breakthroughs was the adoption, at the last meeting, held in Brazil in 2006, of the detailed requirements for documentation accompanying shipments of LMOs intended for direct use as food or feed or for processing.



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Commenting on the meeting, Ms. Marina Silva, the Minister for the Environment of Brazil and outgoing President of the Conference of the Parties said, “We need to build on the achievements at the previous meetings. The Government of Brazil is very proud to have contributed to the establishment of a firm foundation for the future implementation of the Protocol. We look forward to continuing our active role in the further development and implementation of the Protocol under the leadership of Germany.”

The Government of Germany, the host of the meeting, has expressed its wish and determination to make the meeting “an indicator of progress on this complex, contemporary and growing subject”.

Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Protocol on Biosafety said, “This meeting provides yet another opportunity for Parties to the Protocol to discuss and adopt additional measures to guide the implementation of the Protocol. I urge all delegates to carry forward the spirit of consensus and cooperation that was exhibited at the last meeting of the Parties in Curitiba.”

Notes for Journalists

1. The Protocol entered into force on 11 September 2003 and to date 147 States as well as the European Community have ratified it, the latest to do so being: Suriname, Guyana, Myanmar and Guinea.
2. Since the coming into effect of the Protocol on 11 September 2003, the COP-MOP has held three meetings—in Kuala Lumpur in February 2004; in Montreal in June 2005; and in Curitiba, Brazil, in March 2006.
3. In accordance with Article 34 of the Protocol, the COP-MOP has adopted procedures and mechanisms on compliance with the Protocol and established a Compliance Committee to promote compliance, to address cases of non-compliance, and to provide advice or assistance. To date, the Committee has held four meetings, the last being held in Montreal from 21 to 23 November 2007.
4. Article 27 of the Protocol states that: “The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to this Protocol shall, at its first meeting, adopt a process with respect to the appropriate elaboration of international rules and procedures in the field of liability and redress for damage resulting from transboundary movements of living modified organisms, analysing and taking due account of the ongoing processes in international law on these matters, and shall endeavour to complete this process within four years.”
5. The Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts on Liability and Redress in the context of Protocol held five meetings. The first four were held in Montreal, as follows: 25-27 May 2005, 20-24 February 2006, 19-23 February 2007 and 22-26 October 2007, and the fifth was held in Cartagena, Colombia, 12-19 March 2008.
6. Details about the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties including [procedures for media accreditation](http://www.cbd.int/mop4/) media accreditation can be found at: <http://www.cbd.int/mop4/>
7. For access to the live webcast of the proceedings of the meeting, please visit the home page of the CBD website, www.cbd.int, and follow the links indicated.
8. Additional information about the Protocol is available at the following websites:
CBD Web site: <http://www.cbd.int/biosafety> and the Biosafety Clearing-House: <http://bch.cbd.int>.
Frequently asked questions are also available at: <http://www.cbd.int/biosafety/faqs.asp>
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