



COMMUNIQUÉ

Enhancing Montreal support to the activities of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

Montreal, 13 July 2009.— On 9 July 2009, the Montreal-based Secretariat of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and Tourisme Montréal signed for the first time a Memorandum of Understanding related to the convening of meetings under the Convention and its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Tourisme Montréal is a private, non-profit organization, founded in 1919 and representing members and partners from Montreal's tourism industry who share the common goal of promoting Montreal as a premier travel and meeting destination.

The agreement is expected to enhance Montreal support to the Secretariat of the Convention in convening meetings at its headquarters. To this end, during the remainder of 2009, the agreement will contribute to enabling two major intergovernmental meetings in Montreal in November that will involve hundreds of delegates from around the world. These meetings are: the sixth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held from 2 to 6 November; and the eighth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit sharing, scheduled for 9–15 November.

The Convention on Biological Diversity is an international environmental treaty to which currently 190 countries and the European Community are party. Biodiversity and the services provided by ecosystems contribute to every aspect of human well-being. The Convention was established to tackle the unprecedented ongoing global decline in biodiversity and the growing threats.

The Convention Secretariat administers the business and meetings of the Convention and its subsidiary agreement, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The Secretariat has been located in Montreal since 1996. An office of the United Nations—specifically the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)—it has a staff of more than seventy public servants, roughly half of them recruited from within Canada and half internationally.

Each year, the Convention Secretariat organizes intergovernmental meetings and conferences that bring together hundreds of participants as well as a number of smaller international meetings. Though as a rule these are held at the seat of the Secretariat in Montreal, they may be held elsewhere based on offers received by Parties or sister agencies.

In welcoming the agreement, Honourable Charles Lapointe, President and Chief Executive Officer of Tourisme Montréal, said that: “The presence of international organizations in Montréal contributes significantly to the city's economy and to the visibility it enjoys on the international stage. Tourisme Montréal supports the activities of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and looks forward to welcoming representatives from around the world who will be here attending business meetings in Montreal.”

Ahmed Djoghlaflaf, Executive Secretary of the Convention, noted that: “The international community has been privileged by the support of Canada, the Province of Quebec and the City of Montreal in hosting the Convention Secretariat. This new agreement with Tourisme Montréal will further support the international process on which the long-term conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and with it human well-being and life on Earth, so depend.”

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