



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY**

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STATEMENT BY

MR. MARKUS LEHMANN

ECONOMIC ADVISOR, SECRETARIAT OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY

ON BEHALF OF

DR. HAMDALLAH ZEDAN

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

AT THE

EIGHTEENTH GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FORUM

BIODIVERSITY, TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CANCUN, MEXICO, 5 – 7 SEPTEMBER 2003

Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to attend this eighteenth Global Biodiversity Forum as the representative of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Due to other commitments, the Executive Secretary of the CBD, Dr. Hamdallah Zedan, is not able to attend this important event. I am pleased to convey to you his best wishes for fruitful discussions and a successful meeting.

The various meetings of the Global Biodiversity Forum held over the years have provided an opportunity for in-depth and focused analysis and critical dialogue among a wide range of stakeholders on key issues related to biodiversity. They have fostered broader involvement of and partnerships between these stakeholders in actively supporting the achievement of the objectives of the CBD. And they have served as a valuable mechanism to assist policy making and implementation at international, regional and national levels. I am confident that this meeting will be no exception to this tradition.

The present Global Biodiversity Forum addresses a topic of special importance. As we all know, both the international trade regime and the international biodiversity regime are constantly evolving. As rules change, there are potentials for conflict as well as for synergy and cooperation. A sound analysis of these potentials is a prerequisite to ensure that these regimes remain coherent and to further enhance their mutual supportiveness. I am sure the presentations and discussions of the coming days will improve

our understanding of these potentials and will contribute to identify key opportunities for increased cooperation.

This meeting of the GBF comes at a critical time. Indeed, the last two years witnessed increased dynamics in the evolution both of the biodiversity and the trade regimes, with the result that the need for analysis of potential conflicts and synergies, and subsequent cooperative action, became even more pressing.

With regard to the CBD, the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Biodiversity Convention, held in The Hague in April 2002, achieved major advances in implementing the three objectives of the Convention, namely, the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. A number of those accomplishments are of relevance for the work of the WTO and its committees.

The decisions on traditional knowledge and on access and benefit sharing, particularly the adoption of the Bonn Guidelines on Access and Benefit Sharing, deserve to be mentioned. They are of key importance for the relationship between the CBD and the TRIPS Agreement, which is the topic of one of the three workshops of the coming days. I will provide further information on these issues during this workshop.

Moreover, the Guiding Principles on alien species that threaten ecosystems, habitats and species endorse the precautionary approach in regard to the unintentional or intentional introduction of species and are therefore of relevance for the work of the WTO committees on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). It

is a pleasure to see the issues of risk, precaution and biosecurity addressed by another workshop on this GBF.

In September 2002, the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) recognized unambiguously the critical role played by biodiversity in overall sustainable development and poverty eradication. It also recognized that the Convention is the key instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from use of genetic resources. This recognition of the importance of biodiversity and its centrality to efforts to achieve sustainable development and alleviate poverty was a major breakthrough that gives an added impetus to the work under the Convention and the achievement of its objectives.

In Johannesburg, the international community committed in particular to negotiate an international regime on access and benefit sharing under the framework of the Convention, taking into account the Bonn guidelines. In March 2003, the Parties to the Convention agreed to consider this issue at the next meeting of the Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing to be held in Montreal, in December. This meeting is to consider the nature, process, scope, elements and modalities of such an international regime and make recommendations to the Conference of the Parties on how to address this issue. This development underlines the ever more pressing need to address the interrelationship between the provisions of the CBD on access and benefit sharing and the provisions of the TRIPS Agreement in a proactive way, with a view to maximize synergy and ensure mutual supportiveness.

There is another recent development of great significance for the achievement of the objectives of the Conventions. Three and a half years after its adoption in Montreal, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety will enter into force on 11 September 2003. As you know, the Biosafety Protocol sets out procedures for notification and decision-making on import and export of living modified organisms. These procedures include an advance informed agreement procedure, provisions on risk assessment and management, and requirements on safe handling, transport, packaging and identification of living modified organisms. These procedures and requirements are again of relevance for the work of the WTO and its SPS and TBT Committees. As Parties now move on to implement the Protocol, close cooperation will again be key to ensure mutual supportiveness between the Protocol and the Agreements on SPS and TBT.

On the side of the WTO, its work programme as set out in the Doha Ministerial Declaration addresses environmental issues as well as the specific development needs of poorer countries to an extent unprecedented in the arena of international trade negotiations. It is still open whether and to what extent trade negotiators will be able to live up to the expectations raised by this ambitious work programme. We will all know more at the end of next week.

A number of processes initiated or further endorsed by trade ministers in Doha have important linkages with the CBD. One important aspect is, of course, the mandate given to the TRIPS Council to examine the relationship between the TRIPS Agreement and CBD. I look forward to our discussions of this issue in the upcoming workshop.

Some of these processes have the potential to create substantial synergies with the objectives of the Convention. Examples include the negotiations on disciplines for fisheries subsidies as well as the agricultural negotiations. A number of widely-used subsidy designs often generate incentives to put agricultural or fishery resources under additional stress, with detrimental effects on biodiversity. Their removal or the mitigation of their perverse effects by adequate means is therefore needed to accomplish the objectives of the Convention. Again, it is with pleasure to see these issues addressed in the workshop on trade and sustainable livelihoods. In this connection, it is noteworthy that the CBD Secretariat, subsequent to a request of the Conference of the Parties, has recently, supported by an international expert workshop, elaborated proposals on how to apply ways and means to remove or mitigate such perverse incentives. These proposals will now be considered by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the CBD, in November 2003, and will be further submitted to the seventh Conference of the Parties to the Convention, in February 2004. Furthermore, the CBD Secretariat is in the latest stages of preparing a study on the incentive effects of different domestic support measures in agriculture, further to a request of the Conference of the Parties to study the impacts of trade liberalization on agricultural biodiversity. This study will also be submitted the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

The Doha agenda also represents an important step forward in addressing and facilitating the linkages between MEAs and WTO Agreements. As you know, the mandate spelled out in Article 31 foresees negotiations on the relationship between existing WEA rules and specific

trade obligations set out in MEAs, on procedures for regular information exchange between the Secretariats of multilateral environment agreements and the relevant WTO Committees, and on the criteria for the granting of observer status.

The exchange of information and the granting of observer status are important means to facilitate linkages between the CBD and the WTO. Improved information exchange will further enable both CBD Parties and WTO Members to avoid potential tensions between their regimes, with regard to both current and future negotiations and the implementation of existing agreements. In particular, the granting of observer status is essential in ensuring a comprehensive flow of information that is synchronized with the real time of negotiations and discussions in the respective bodies. Such an arrangement would be to the mutual advantage of both CBD and the WTO, and would be well in line with the recent international calls for an intensified cooperation between the multilateral institutions working on trade and on the environment, in order to better serve their common objective of sustainable development.

This important issue remains so far blocked at the WTO, bearing the consequence that the requests for observer status the CBD Secretariat submitted to a number of relevant WTO Committees are pending. However, some WTO committees have found pragmatic interim arrangements. In particular, the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment in Special Session recently extended special invitations to a number of MEA Secretariats, including the CBD Secretariat, to participate in their deliberations. Moreover, the CBD Secretariat recently had the opportunity to brief the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures in an

informal information session regarding the work relating to the implementation of the Biosafety Protocol and invasive alien species. These initiatives were much appreciated. Until a final solution is found, the regularization of such interim practices in these and other relevant WTO committees would certainly be very useful.

Let me conclude by thanking the organizers of this Forum for making the arrangements for us to come here. I look forward to informative and stimulating discussions in the coming days.

Thank you for your attention.