

Opening Statement by The President of the COP-MOP
Third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD serving as the meeting of
the Parties to the Protocol
13 March 2006, Curitiba, Brazil

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to welcome you all to this third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, in this beautiful city of Curitiba, known as the ecological capital of Brazil! Allow me first of all to thank and congratulate the Government and the people of Brazil for hosting this meeting and making available such excellent facilities for our deliberations.

Secondly, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the new Executive Secretary of the CBD, Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, for his “first meeting of the COP-MOP” in his new capacity as Executive Secretary. We look forward to working with you, Ahmed, in advancing the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to which you have been associated for several years, as many of us know. We are aware, in particular, of the role you played when you were the Assistant Executive Director of UNEP and Director the GEF Division, to promote the development of national biosafety frameworks, a project that is assisting 127 developing countries and countries with economies in transition to put in place the necessary requirements to meet the challenges of effective implementation of the Biosafety Protocol and 145 countries to access the Biosafety Clearing House. We have no doubt that under your able and energetic leadership, the Secretariat of the CBD will continue to be a very important catalyst in the implementation of the Protocol.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I said at the beginning, we are all very delighted to have the third meeting of the Parties to the Protocol in this beautiful country. Brazil is known as one the Mega-diverse wonders of the world. This fact should keep us focused on the reason why we are here, namely: to contribute to the achievement of the three noble objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity by giving its Protocol on Biosafety the operational guidance required to be implemented by all countries, and thus remove or minimize any potential adverse effects that living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology may have on biological diversity, including the biodiversity of this beautiful and incomparable country, Brazil.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me now to share briefly with you my feelings and my expectations regarding the task awaiting us at this third meeting. Some nine months ago, we were in Montreal for

the second meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, at which a number of very important decisions were taken to set the Protocol on the path of implementation. Among other things, the meeting advanced significantly the operationalization of capacity building for the effective implementation of the Protocol, the implementation of the Biosafety Clearing House, the issue of public awareness and participation, the consideration of the provisions on risk assessment and risk management, and many other items under the Protocol. However, in the view of many who observed the achievements of the second meeting of the Parties, that meeting was incomplete, in spite of the progress on all the items I just mentioned. That is because of its inability to take a decision on the issue of detailed requirements for identification of living modified organisms intended for direct use as food or feed, or for processing.

The Protocol clearly stipulates that the meeting of the Parties **shall** take a decision on the detailed requirements of identification. We failed to do so at COP-MOP2. I, therefore, urge each of you to make a commitment not to leave Curitiba without having resolved this outstanding issue. This is important if we are to enhance the effective implementation of the Protocol which we spent so many years and so much energy crafting.

Distinguished Delegates,

If our deliberations stay as focused as possible on the practical ways of implementing the Protocol and if we are inspired by the spirit of compromise, we shall be in a position to quickly reach agreement on all items on the agenda of this third meeting of the Parties, including paragraph 2 (a) of Article 18. Such expeditious proceeding will reinforce the significance of the Cartagena Protocol as an international agreement that aims at establishing and implementing a harmonized framework of rules and procedures to govern the movement of living modified organisms across borders.

The task of implementation can be a challenging one, especially for developing countries, many of which are still in the process of developing their domestic biosafety regulatory frameworks. For these countries, the decisions of the COP-MOP are an important source of guidance in the process of finalizing their domestic regulatory frameworks. Indeed, I think and I hope that we can all agree that capacity-building is crucial if the Protocol is to contribute to protecting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, taking also into account risks to human health.

Distinguished Delegates,

The negotiations of the Protocol ended on 29 January 2000, some six years ago. As I outlined previously, the task at hand for this third meeting of the Parties is to continue on the path laid by the first and second meetings in giving operational guidance and direction to the provisions of the Protocol. We are not here to renegotiate the text of the Protocol. For the sake of our Protocol and to make the most of our limited time here this week, let us endeavor not to spend too much time repeating positions that have been expressed on previous occasions, but rather focus on reaching agreement on how best to implement the Protocol.

We shall be assisted in this task by the excellent documentation prepared by the Secretariat for all the substantive issues to be considered. I take this opportunity to thank and congratulate again Ahmed Djoghlaif, the Executive Secretary of the Convention, and all the staff of the Secretariat, for the very good preparations for this third meeting of COP-MOP in general, and in particular the excellent quality of the documentation before us. All this preparation was achieved in spite of the overwhelming number of meetings that the Secretariat had to prepare and organize during the past nine months, a very short time that was available between the second meeting of COP-MOP and this third meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Delegates,

With those few remarks, I now declare open the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

[Gavel].

Thank you all for your kind attention.
