

SIXTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES SERVING AS THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY

WELCOME MESSAGE FROM BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

It gives me great pleasure welcome you to the sixth 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 (COP-MOP 6). I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to the Government of India for hosting the meeting.

This meeting comes at a time when the international community marks the 20th anniversary of the historic 1992 Earth Summit – the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development – which brought together more than 100 heads of state and government to adopt guiding principles and a blueprint towards sustainable development in the 21st century (Agenda 21). The Earth Summit underscored the need for States to cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem. In Chapter 16 of Agenda 21 on environmentally sound application of biotechnology it also called for the creation of international internationally agreed guidelines on safety in biotechnology applications.

Consequently, Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in January 2000 with the objective to ensuring 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 biological diversity, taking also into account risks to human health. They recognized that modern biotechnology has great potential to contribute to the improvement of human well-being and sustainable development. However, they also recognized that it must be developed and used with adequate safety measures.

Progress has been made towards the implementation of the Protocol since its entry into force in September 2003. According to the information made available through the second national reports, a number of Parties have established legal, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the Protocol and many have taken steps to build their human resources and institutional capacities in biosafety. At the global level, the Biosafety Clearing-House is now fully functional, the Compliance Committee is in place with a strong mandate to support the Parties and guidance has been provided by the COP-MOP on a number of issues. Indeed, the decisions taken at previous meetings of the Parties have provided a strong foundation for implementation of the Protocol at national, regional and international levels. Notably, the Strategic Plan for the Protocol adopted at the last meeting has set a new agenda for action over the next decade.

At this sixth meeting, governments will review the status of implementation of core elements of the Protocol and take additional decisions to further advance the implementation of various provisions of the Protocol, including: risk assessment, socio-economic considerations and unintentional transboundary movements of LMOs and emergency measures.

COP-MOP 6 also comes at a time when many Governments are making preparations to ratify or accede to the Nagoya – Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The Supplementary Protocol received a total of 51 signatures and two ratifications by 6 March 2012 when it was closed for signature. With the momentum gained during and after the period for signature, I am confident that the 40 instruments of ratification or accession required for it to enter into force will be secured in the near future.

COP-MOP 6 provides yet another opportunity to further strengthen international cooperation and build global political support for the Protocol and its Supplementary Protocol. It also presents an opportunity to lay new strategies and mobilize resources for the implementation of the two treaties. I am confident that through mutual commitment and cooperation, COP-MOP 6 will make the Protocol grow stronger and more effective in protecting biodiversity from potential adverse effects by LMOs, in line with the motto of this meeting – Prakruti Rakshati Rakshita – “Nature Protects if She is Protected”. I look forward to the full engagement and participation of all relevant stakeholders.