



## CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

## PRESS RELEASE

For use of the media only;  
Not an official document.

### **Promoting biodiversity as a powerful instrument to achieve lasting peace and shared prosperity for all nations of the world**

**Montreal, 17 January 2006** – Officials from the 188 members of the Convention on Biological Diversity will gather in the historic city of Grenada, Spain from 30 January to 3 February 2006 to make progress on one of the three pillars of the Convention on Biological Diversity, aimed at promoting access to genetic resources and ensuring fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources of this planet.

Successful achievement of this fundamental objective of the Convention of life on Earth will result in a powerful instrument for the promotion of peace, the realization achievement of shared prosperity on our planet, and the elevation of biodiversity as the engine of sustainable development and a key resource in the fight against hunger and poverty.

The meeting of the Working Group on Access and Benefit-Sharing has been given the mandate to translate into reality the commitment taken by the 110 Heads of State and Government at the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa in September 2002 for the adoption of an international regime on access to genetic resources and the sharing of benefits.

The talks are based upon the notion that by granting a company or organization access to its genetic resources (such as plants that can be used to produce new pharmaceuticals or fragrances), a country or indigenous or local community will in return receive a fair share of the profits or other benefits.

“My hope is that this meeting in Granada will mark a turning point and will thus be remembered as the one during which all countries decided to roll up their sleeves and achieve a breakthrough in the negotiations of an international regime which will be the foundation of a new partnership between providers and users of the wealth of Mother Nature”, said Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, the Convention’s Executive Secretary.

The Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes the sovereign right of States over their genetic resources and the need to find a balance between providing access to those resources and ensuring the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their use.

“Uncertainty is a serious disincentive for business and a major obstacle for long term investment” stated Dr Djoghlaf. “The current uncertainty surrounding the whole issue of access to genetic resources and the sharing of benefits is prejudicial to both providers and users of genetic resources.”

He added that “A mutually agreed lasting solution is in the interest of all parties concerned. It is also a powerful instrument for fighting poverty in poor countries endowed with tremendous biological resources. It is for this reason that it can contribute to the achievement of lasting peace and security as well as to the realization of shared prosperity for all the world”

Indeed, developing countries, as providers of genetic resources, are concerned about what they regard as the misappropriation of their genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge. Users of genetic resources are concerned by the absence of clear rules for access to genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge. The issue of traditional knowledge and the role of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) are key elements to be addressed for achieving this new international regime

Until recently, all plants, animals and microorganisms were considered to be part of the common heritage of humankind. Foreign prospectors felt free to take these biological resources from their countries of origin and use them to develop drugs and other commercial products.

The resulting products would be sold by foreign companies under the protection of patents or other intellectual property rights. Meanwhile, the country of origin – often from the developing world, where most biodiversity is found – would receive no benefit from the commercial exploitation of its resources.

Dr Djoghlaf concluded “We shall all gain – poor and rich countries, communities, and companies – from a lasting solution on the use of the benefits generously offered by Mother Nature. Let us therefore, through our decisions in the historic city of Grenada, begin a new era in our relationship with nature, and our relationship amongst ourselves as human beings. We owe it to ourselves and to our children”

#### **Note to journalists:**

**What:** FOURTH MEETING OF THE AD HOC OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON ACCESS AND BENEFIT - SHARING

**Where:** Palacio de Exposiciones y Congresos de Granada, Paseo del Violon s/n 18006 Granada, Spain

**When:** 30 January to 3 February 2006

**Accreditation:** <http://www.biodiv.org/programmes/outreach/press/acreditations.asp>

**Documents:** <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/meeting.aspx?mtg=ABSWG-04>

**Contact:** David Ainsworth, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity +1 514 287 7025; mobile +1 514 833 0196; email [david.ainsworth@biodiv.org](mailto:david.ainsworth@biodiv.org)