



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



Press Release

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Largest international gathering on Biosafety meets in Bonn to finalize arrangements for the Cartagena Protocol

Bonn, May 12 2008- Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety opened their fourth meeting today at the Maritim Hotel in Bonn, in Germany. More than 3000 participants from 147 countries assembled to fulfill their commitment to ensuring the safe use of modern biotechnology, including reaching an agreement on international rules on liability and redress for potential damages caused by LMOs. Their discussions will continue until 16 May 2008.

One of the main issues of this five-day meeting is the elaboration of international rules and procedures on liability and redress with respect to damage resulting from the transboundary movements of living modified organisms (LMOs), commonly referred to as genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Discussions will be based on the report of the working group, established in 2004 at the first meeting of the Parties, which was mandated to elaborate the options.

The importance of reaching agreement on international rules and procedures on liability and redress, Article 27 of the Protocol, was also emphasized by Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary to the Convention on Biological Diversity. "I urge you to seize the moment" he said. "Postponing action on Article 27 is no longer an option."

"You are mandated to fulfill the requirement, set out in Article 27 in 2000, when the Protocol was signed," said Mr. Djoghlaif. "In doing this, you will ensure the effective implementation of the Protocol."

Ambassador Raymundo Magno of Brazil, speaking on behalf of the chair of the third meeting of the Parties, Environment Minister Marina Silva, reminded delegates of the successes at MOP-3 in forging a common vision with regard to documentation requirements under Article 18. "Now we have the opportunity to put in place another key element of the Protocol – rules and procedures on liability and redress." he said.

Ursula Heinen, the deputy minister for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection for Germany, the president for this meeting also referred to liability and redress and said "I feel very confident, therefore, that constructive and successful talks on this subject will ensue this week." She called for delegates to "show readiness to compromise." She also thanked the government of Brazil for its work in the previous presidency.

Delegates to the meeting will discuss a variety of other issues, including ways to finance the continued work of the Protocol, the socio economic impacts of LMOs on biodiversity, new developments for the Biosafety Clearing-House and further guidance on specific aspects of risk assessment and risk management.



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Coinciding with the opening of the meeting, was a festival and demonstration organized by civil society organizations. Organized in the context of the Planet Diversity conference, it drew over 6,000 people. “Civil society is another important actor for implementation of the Protocol” said Ahmed Djoghlaif, addressing the audience. “We welcome your voice of support.”

Notes for Journalists

1. The Protocol entered into force on 11 September 2003 and to date 147 States as well as the European Community have ratified it, the latest to do so being: Suriname, Guyana, Myanmar and Guinea.
2. Since the coming into effect of the Protocol on 11 September 2003, the COP-MOP has held three meetings—in Kuala Lumpur in February 2004; in Montreal in June 2005; and in Curitiba, Brazil, in March 2006.
3. In accordance with Article 34 of the Protocol, the COP-MOP has adopted procedures and mechanisms on compliance with the Protocol and established a Compliance Committee to promote compliance, to address cases of non-compliance, and to provide advice or assistance. To date, the Committee has held four meetings, the last being held in Montreal from 21 to 23 November 2007.
4. Article 27 of the Protocol states that: “The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to this Protocol shall, at its first meeting, adopt a process with respect to the appropriate elaboration of international rules and procedures in the field of liability and redress for damage resulting from transboundary movements of living modified organisms, analysing and taking due account of the ongoing processes in international law on these matters, and shall endeavour to complete this process within four years.”
5. The Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts on Liability and Redress in the context of Protocol held five meetings. The first four were held in Montreal, as follows: 25-27 May 2005, 20-24 February 2006, 19-23 February 2007 and 22-26 October 2007, and the fifth was held in Cartagena, Colombia, 12-19 March 2008.
6. Details about the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties including procedures for media accreditation can be found at:
<http://www.cbd.int/mop4/>
7. For access to the live webcast of the proceedings of the meeting, please visit
<http://www.cbd.int/mop4/webcast/>
8. Additional information about the Protocol is available at the following websites:

CBD Web site: <http://www.cbd.int/biosafety>
and the Biosafety Clearing-House: <http://bch.cbd.int>.
Frequently asked questions are also available at: <http://www.cbd.int/biosafety/faqs.asp>
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