



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

Press Release

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INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON BIOSAFETY MARKS ITS FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

Montreal, 8 September 2008 — On 11 September, the world community will celebrate the fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, an important milestone in ensuring the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology.

The theme for the anniversary is: *“The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety: Five years of global cooperation towards sustainable development”*.

Modern biotechnology has potential to help address some of the major global challenges facing us today, including food security and poverty reduction. The Protocol provides a framework that can enable us to derive maximum benefits from biotechnology without compromising biological diversity or human health.

The Protocol was adopted in Montreal on 29 January 2000 after more than five years of tough negotiations and it entered into force on 11 September 2003. To date 147 countries and the European Community have ratified or acceded to the Protocol, making it one of the most rapidly supported treaties in history.

Major progress has been made over the last five years in implementing the Protocol. At national level, more than 100 countries have now developed legal and administrative frameworks and other measures necessary to implement the Protocol and many are in the process of establishing national systems for sharing information and promoting awareness of the Protocol.

A number of countries have also embarked on projects and other activities to build and strengthen human and institutional capacities in the safe use of biotechnology.

At the global level, the governing body of the Protocol has adopted more than 60 decisions elaborating operational rules, procedures and mechanisms to enable Parties to effectively implement the Protocol. Among other things, the Biosafety Clearing-House has become operational and is facilitating the exchange of information on, and experience with, living modified organisms.

Numerous biosafety related capacity-building programmes have been initiated by governmental and non-governmental bodies, and a mechanism to forge coordination among these initiatives has been established.



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The Parties have also established procedures and mechanisms on compliance under the Protocol and have defined detailed requirements for documentation accompanying shipments of living modified organisms. Furthermore, at their fourth governing meeting held in May this year, the Parties agreed to continue negotiations for an international regime on liability and redress — that would include both legally binding and non-legally binding provisions — for damage resulting from the transboundary movements of living modified organisms.

“The achievements made under the Protocol in such a short period, clearly demonstrate the commitment and determination of the world community to realize the objective of the Protocol”, said Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. “I wish to pay tribute to all Parties, to other Governments and to all stakeholders for their concerted effort in operationalising the Protocol”, he added.

Dr. Djoghlaif invited all Governments and other stakeholders to re-double their efforts and uphold the ethos of cooperation and consensus built over the past years. “Let us translate our good intentions into further concrete actions by working together, maximizing available financial, human and technical resources, to achieve full implementation of the Protocol and sharing experiences and lessons learned in the safe use of biotechnology”, he said.

Notes for Journalists

1. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is a supplementary agreement to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. Its objective is to contribute to ensuring the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms that may have adverse effects on conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking also into account risks to human health.
2. The Protocol was adopted on 29 January 2000 in Montreal, Canada and entered into force on 11 September 2003, ninety days after the Republic of Palau deposited the fiftieth instrument of ratification with the Secretary General of the United Nations.
3. The Protocol is named after the Colombian city of Cartagena where the final round of its negotiations was launched.
4. Additional information about the Protocol is available at the following websites:
CBD website: <http://www.cbd.int/biosafety>
Web page for the 5th anniversary: <http://www.cbd.int/biosafety/anniversary/>
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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