

PRESS RELEASE

Talks begin to finalize the international regime on access and benefit-sharing of the Earth's genetic resources

Montreal, 18 March 2010 – After six years of intensive discussions, more than 500 delegates will gather in Cali, Colombia, from 22 to 28 March 2010 to finalize the text of the international regime on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from their use. This meeting will be the last formal negotiating session before the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit in October.

Access and benefit-sharing (ABS) refers to the way in which genetic resources may be accessed, and how the benefits that result from their use are shared between the people or countries using the resources and the people or countries that provide them. Ensuring the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of genetic resources is one of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

This ninth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-Sharing, builds on previous negotiating sessions, the most recent in Montreal in late 2009, as well as on extensive and productive regional and informal consultations held across the globe in the last few months.

It will produce a draft text of the international regime that will be submitted for adoption at the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit, otherwise known as the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 10) to the CBD, to be held in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, in October 2010. Over 10,000 participants are expected to attend this historic meeting. The high-level segment of this historic meeting will be held on 27-29 October 2010 and will be preceded by a high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly exclusively devoted to biodiversity to be held in New York in September 2010 in conjunction with the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly and with the participation of Heads of State and Government.

The negotiation of an international regime on access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing aims at the adoption of an instrument or instruments to effectively implement the access and benefit-sharing provisions of the Convention, as well as Article 8(j) of the Convention related to the equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources.

Emphasizing the urgency of the task at hand, Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity said, “The time for talk is over. The time for action is now. Cali is the right place to demonstrate the required political will and display the necessary spirit of compromise by all stakeholders. Cali is the time to deliver the Johannesburg commitment, fulfil the Curitiba commitment and implement the Bonn mandate. Cali is the right place and the right opportunity to offer to the children of the world as a gift to the celebration of this year the International Year of Biodiversity the draft Aichi-Nagoya Protocol on access and benefit sharing.”

The Co-Chairs of the negotiating committee, Timothy Hodges of Canada and Fernando Casas of Colombia, said “The prospects for finalizing the text of the international regime have never been better and the stakes have never been higher. There is no doubt that a lot of hard work will be needed in Cali over the next seven days in order for the negotiators to fulfil their mandate from the Conference of the

Parties. But a new spirit of co-operation has emerged and there is a growing appreciation that this regime represents a win-win situation for all countries.”

They added that: “The international regime is about seizing opportunity, together. After all, every one of us relies on genetic resources for food, health and social well-being. We have a lot in common and now is the time to recognize and build on this simple fact.”

Note to Editors:

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits from utilization of genetic resources. With 193 Parties, the Convention has near universal participation among countries committed to preserving life on Earth. The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety a supplementary treaty to the Convention seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 156 countries and the European Community are party to the Protocol. The Secretariat of the Convention and its Cartagena Protocol is located in Montreal. www.cbd.int/

Access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of their utilization. The Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes the sovereign rights of States over their natural resources in areas within their jurisdiction. Parties to the Convention therefore have the authority to determine access to genetic resources in areas within their jurisdiction. Parties also have the obligation to take appropriate measures with the aim of sharing the benefits derived from their use. Genetic resources, whether from plants, animals or micro-organisms, may be used for different purposes. Users of genetic resources can include research institutes, universities and private companies operating in various sectors such as pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, agriculture, horticulture and biotechnology. Benefits derived from genetic resources may include the result of research and development carried out on genetic resources, the transfer of technologies which make use of those resources, participation in biotechnological research activities, or monetary benefits arising from the commercialization of products based on genetic resources. www.cbd.int/abs

2010 International Year of Biodiversity The United Nations declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB) to raise awareness about the crucial importance of biodiversity, to communicate the human costs of biodiversity loss, and to engage people, particularly youth, throughout the world in the fight to protect all life on Earth. Initiatives will be organized throughout the year to disseminate information, promote the protection of biodiversity and encourage countries, organizations, and individuals to take direct action to reduce biodiversity loss. The focal point for the year is the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. www.cbd.int/2010/welcome/

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