

PRESS RELEASE

Governments discuss text of Protocol for the sharing of benefits from the genetic resources of the planet

Cali, Colombia, 22 March 2010 – In a sign of tremendous progress, 193 Parties to the Convention and their partners agreed today to use a draft protocol text, crafted through extensive consultations over the last months, to begin their deliberations on access and benefit sharing of the genetic resources of the planet today.

Over the next seven days, at the ninth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing, Governments will negotiate the text of the protocol for access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their use.

The protocol will provide for transparent and clear procedures for users and providers of genetic resources, as they mobilize material such as that found in microbes and plants for commercial and non-commercial use.

The results of this meeting, a protocol under the Convention on Biological Diversity will be advanced for adoption by world Governments at the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit, in October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan.

“Eight years after Johannesburg and the ABS commitment, four years after Curitiba and the ABS target, the meeting in Cali has the responsibility to deliver the Protocol on ABS to be adopted in Nagoya,” said Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The text under discussion is based on the results of the eighth meeting, in November 2009 and the resulting so-called Montreal Annex. This text was then subjected to extensive consultations and discussions around the world. Last week, representatives of all regions and other stakeholders met at informal talks in Cali to take stock. The meetings of the Co-Chairs’ Interregional Consultations (CIIC), otherwise known as the Nogales Group resulted in the text that is being discussed today.

“The Nogales Group, comprising representative of all regions and stakeholders, has fulfilled its mandate over the weekend. It is now up to the more than 600 participants of this meeting to fulfil their mandate and send to Nagoya for adoption a draft protocol on access and benefit-sharing,” said Mr. Djoghlaif.

Joschen Flasarth of Germany, representing the President of the ninth of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, said, “This working group should be proud of the what they have accomplished. We can be proud of the Co-Chairs, and we can be proud of the Secretariat.” He added that, “The text captures a wide range of views and as a result of the mode of discussions I feel that we really have achieved a great deal. While there are differences of views, and things to bridge we have a solid basis for negotiations.” He called on Parties to finalize the draft in order for it to be adopted in Nagoya.

“A new streamlined negotiating text, which will form the basis of our discussions, meets certain key criteria: its key language is meaningful, the options are clear,” said the Co-Chairs of the negotiating process, Tim Hodges of Canada and Fernando Casas of Colombia. “And given the process through which

we have all advanced, it is credible, and, perhaps most importantly, it is straightforward and understandable by actors who are outside the process and now need to understand the opportunities represented by adoption of the ABS regime.”

Ms. Yadir Salazar, Director for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Colombia, said, “The protocol on access and benefit sharing is the international community’s opportunity to preserve our genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with biodiversity under a framework of sustainable development that can have a positive impact on the entrepreneurial development of our regions and fulfill the expectations of economic and social development of our countries.”

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).

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.

The more than 600 participants also took part in a ceremony to mark the International Year of Biodiversity, organized by the Government of Colombia in collaboration with the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. Participants in the ceremony included the Minister of Environment, Housing and Land Use of Colombia, Carlos Costa Posada, the Colombian Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Miguel Camilo Ruiz, and the local authorities of Cali.

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

The documents under discussion at the meeting, including the draft protocol text are available at:

<https://www.cbd.int/wgabs9/>

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/

For more information contact David Ainsworth +1 514 833 0196 or at david.ainsworth@cbd.int or Johan Hedlund +1 514 287 6670 or johan.hedlund@cbd.int
