

PRESS RELEASE

One step further towards the adoption of the Aichi Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing

Montreal, 21 September 2010 – Working late into the night, Governments continued to negotiate the core issues for an international protocol on the provision and use of the genetic resources of the planet. The drafting committee known as the Interregional Negotiating Group concluded its discussions on a draft protocol text, which will be advanced for finalization and approval at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan.

“The world is watching. The Heads of State and Government who will assemble on 22 September at the historical New York summit on biodiversity are waiting. The world is also waiting to hear the good news. A robust protocol on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable-sharing of the benefits from their use is a major tool for the conservation and sustainable use of the biodiversity of our planet,” said Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary to the Convention on Biological Diversity. “Governments around the world and their partners are demonstrating their commitments and have displayed magnificent political will.”

The negotiations were structured around the draft protocol text that was discussed in Montreal in July this year. The document was originally tabled at the beginning of the ninth meeting of the Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing, which took place in Cali, Colombia, last March.

Delegates worked to reach consensus on a number of key issues:

- The definition of the utilization of genetic resources;
- The scope of application of the agreement;
- The international framework applicable to accessing genetic resources and the sharing of the benefits arising from their utilization;
- The provisions for monitoring compliance; and
- Benefit-sharing with indigenous peoples whenever their traditional knowledge is used in conjunction with genetic resources.

The Co-Chairs for the meeting, Timothy Hodges of Canada and Fernando Casas of Colombia, expressed satisfaction with the discussions, but stressed the need for Governments to move forward. “There is still a lot of work to be done,” they said. “Governments have made progress this week in Montreal. We go to Nagoya with a number of key issues to finalize. We have seen a spirit and willingness to achieve this protocol. We need to capitalize on this.”

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. Access and benefit-sharing refers to the way genetic resources—whether from plants, animals or microorganisms—are accessed in countries of origin, and how

the benefits that result from their use by various research institutes, universities or private companies are shared with the people or countries that provide them.

Governments have agreed to finalize negotiations as soon as possible and no later than 2010 at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

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 of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 193 Parties, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. 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, 159 countries and the European Union have ratified the Protocol. The Secretariat of the Convention and its Cartagena Protocol is located in Montreal.

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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 ninth meeting of the working Group, are available at: 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/

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