



PRESS RELEASE

A United Nations Conference on the Safe Use of Modern Biotechnology Opens Tomorrow

Nagoya, 10 October, 2010 – A five-day meeting of the governing body of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, known as the “Conference of the Parties serving as meeting of the Parties to the Protocol” (or COP-MOP) opens here Monday at the Nagoya Congress Centre. More than 4,000 delegates, including representatives from Governments, civil society and industry are expected to attend. The meeting will discuss and adopt further decisions to ensure the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms (LMOs) resulting from modern biotechnology.

At the top of the meeting’s agenda is the issue of international rules and procedures on liability and redress for damage resulting from LMOs. The meeting is expected to adopt a “Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety”.

Ahead of the meeting, a small group of government legal and technical experts, which was established at the last COP-MOP, agreed on the draft text of the supplementary protocol. The text will be presented to the meeting next week for adoption.

The meeting is also scheduled to adopt a 10-year strategic plan for the Protocol and a programme of work to implement the plan. It will also consider steps to develop further guidance for assessing and managing risks of specific types of LMOs taking into account recommendations of an Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Risk Assessment and Risk Management which was established at the last meeting of the Parties.

Other issues on the meeting’s agenda include: capacity-building, public awareness and participation, information-sharing through the Biosafety Clearing-House, financial mechanism and resources for the Protocol’s implementation, as well as handling, transport, packaging and identification of living modified organisms.

Speaking ahead of the meeting, H.E. Ms. Julia Klöckner, Parliamentary State Secretary for the German Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, and the outgoing President of the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, said: “The upcoming meeting presents a unique opportunity for the Parties to the Protocol to take decisions that will significantly influence the future of the Protocol. This is particularly so as Parties are poised to adopt a Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress and a strategic plan for the Protocol.”



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Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity said: “The Nagoya Biosafety meeting is taking place at a time of unprecedented challenges arising from the continued loss of biodiversity compounded by climate change. Furthering the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is key to meeting these challenges and crucial to achieving the motto of the meeting – Living in harmony with nature into the future”.

Mr. Michihiko Kano, the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan and the incoming Chair of the meeting, said: “The upcoming meeting will be an event for discussion of some extremely important topics regarding the conservation of biodiversity. These include the possible adoption of a supplementary protocol on liability and redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Everyone in attendance will be required to make significant efforts towards resolving those issues. As chairman of the meeting, I am committed to contributing to the meeting’s success.”

Notes for Journalists

1. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is a supplementary agreement to the 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. To date, 159 countries and the European Union have ratified or acceded to it.
3. The Protocol is named after the Colombian city of Cartagena where the final round of its negotiations was launched.
4. The governing body of the Protocol, known as the Conference of the Parties to Convention on Biological Diversity serving as meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (or COP-MOP, in short), has held four meetings – in Kuala Lumpur in February 2004; in Montreal in June 2005; in Curitiba, Brazil, in March 2006; and in Bonn in May 2008.
5. 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.”

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6. Additional information is available at the following websites:

Protocol website: <http://www.cbd.int/biosafety>

MOP 5 media website: <http://www.cbd.int/mop5/meeting/media/>

Frequently asked questions: <http://www.cbd.int/biosafety/faqs.asp>