



PRESS RELEASE

International treaty on biosafety marks its tenth anniversary

Montreal, 10 September 2013 – Under the theme, *10 Years of Promoting Safety in the Use of Biotechnology*, the international community is marking the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the international agreement governing the movement of living modified organisms (LMOs) across national borders – the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The Protocol entered into force on 11 September 2003 ninety days after 50 countries agreed to be bound by it.

As a supplementary treaty to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety aims to ensure the safe handling, transfer and use of LMOs resulting from modern biotechnology, commonly known as genetically modified organisms (GMOs) that may have adverse effects on biological diversity.

Modern biotechnology has potential to improve human wellbeing, for example through enhancing agricultural productivity, but there is concern about potential risks that LMOs may pose to biological diversity and human health. The Cartagena Protocol is the global community's response to this concern. The Cartagena Protocol provides a framework that can enable us to derive maximum benefit from modern biotechnology without compromising the environment and human health.

Over the past 10 years, a lot of progress has been made towards the implementation of the Protocol. Today, over 100 countries have developed national legal frameworks and administrative systems tailored to handle applications and facilitate decision-making regarding the export and import of LMOs. These systems require risk assessments to be conducted to inform any decisions on the imports of LMOs. Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Protocol have also developed systems to ensure that LMOs are handled, packaged and transported across borders under safe conditions. At the international level, a robust information exchange mechanism on LMOs, the Biosafety Clearing-House, is fully functional and being used as an authoritative source of information on LMOs.

Another notable achievement came in 2010 with the adoption by Parties to the Protocol of the Nagoya Kuala-Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The Supplementary Protocol establishes international rules and procedures on liability and redress for potential damage resulting from the export and import of LMOs.

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, said: *“We have certainly come a long way. With 166 Parties, the Cartagena Protocol is clearly one of the fastest growing treaties of the United Nations. However for the Protocol to be fully effective, we need to work towards achieving its universal membership and foster a better understanding among all stakeholders on how the Protocol contributes to sustainable development. I call upon all countries that have not yet done so to fast track their national processes to ratify or accede to the Cartagena Protocol and its Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress as soon as possible.”*



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To commemorate the anniversary, the Secretariat of the Protocol has developed a short video in the six official languages of the United Nations, highlighting the main achievements of the Protocol and has also made available a series of short videos from representatives of Parties and relevant organizations: <http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/10thAnniversary.shtml>. Parties, governments and relevant organisations are urged to organize events on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary to enhance public awareness on the importance of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Notes to Editors

The Protocol was adopted in Montreal on 29 January 2000 and entered into force on 11 September 2003. To date, 165 countries and the European Union are Parties to the Protocol.

The Nagoya – Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety was adopted on 15 October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan, at the fifth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol in its decision BS-V/11. To date, 15 countries and the European Union have deposited their instruments of ratification or accession to the Supplementary Protocol.

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The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety website: <http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/>

The 10th anniversary webpage: <http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/10thAnniversary.shtml>