



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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STATEMENT BY

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

TO

THE MEETING OF TECHNICAL EXPERTS ON THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE

Montreal, Canada, 11 – 13 September 2000

Good morning, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I wish to welcome you all very warmly to Montreal and the Meeting of Technical Experts on the Biosafety Clearing-House. It is a pleasure to meet you today and start our work on this initiative.

I also wish to particularly thank the Governments that contributed financially to ensure a large participation in the meeting and to its successful organization: Austria, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

As you all know, the successful conclusion of the Biosafety Protocol, in January 2000, was an exciting development and major success for the Convention. But the adoption of the Protocol was, of course, only the first step. We are now beginning the next stage, that of its implementation, which is perhaps even more challenging and important.

A key mechanism for the implementation of the Protocol will be the Biosafety Clearing-House, established under Article 20 of the Biosafety Protocol in order to facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, living modified organisms; and to assist Parties to implement the Protocol.

This meeting of technical experts on the Biosafety Clearing-House was called for by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention under decision EM-I/3 and decision V/1. Over the next three days, you will be considering issues relevant to information-sharing requirements and the Biosafety Clearing-House, as reflected in the work plan of the ICCP which was endorsed by the Conference of the Parties at its fifth meeting in May 2000. This work plan is included in document

UNEP/CBD/BS/TE-BCH/1/INF/3.

The pre-session documents distributed by the Secretariat cover the agenda items to be addressed during this meeting. I would like to draw your attention, in particular, to the annotated provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/BS/TE-BCH/1/Add.1) which provides an overview of the various issues to be discussed at the meeting, as well as a tentative timetable.

In an effort to facilitate the work of the experts, the provisional agenda organizes the issues under three headings, namely:

1. Establishment of the Biosafety Clearing-House;
2. Operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House;
3. Partnership opportunities.

The Secretariat has prepared three background papers under item 3 of the agenda on 'issues for in-depth consideration'. Each of these headings includes a number of topics that encompass the various issues outlined under the information-sharing and the Biosafety Clearing-House item in the work plan of the ICCP. I would like to acknowledge with appreciation the contribution made to the preparation of these papers by some of the experts present here today, in particular ICGEB and the European Commission. I hope that you will find these papers useful for your discussions.

The expected outcome of this meeting will be a report including recommendations on each of the issues identified in the work plan of the ICCP. The recommendations from the meeting will be communicated to the ICCP at its first

meeting, to be held in Montpellier, France, from 11 to 15 December 2000.

Finally, I wish to assure all participants of the full support of the Secretariat staff members during this meeting. Let me introduce some of my colleagues who will be assisting you throughout this meeting: Cyrie Sendashonga and Kirsty Galloway McLean are from the Biosafety Unit; and Tony Gross and Olivier de Munck from the Clearing-House Mechanism.

I wish you a most successful and productive meeting and I thank you for your attention.

The meeting must now elect its Chair and Rapporteur. In accordance with established practice, it is my pleasure to now invite proposals from the floor.