



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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STATEMENT BY
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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
TO
The Liaison Group Meeting of Technical Experts on the Biosafety
Clearing-House
Montreal, Canada, 19 – 20 March 2001

I would like to welcome you all to this meeting on the Biosafety Clearing-house established by the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to:

- i. Facilitate scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, LMOs; and
- ii. Assist Parties in the implementation of the Protocol.

The text of the Protocol was adopted in January 2001 by the Extraordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD and opened for signature in Nairobi on the occasion of COP-5 and to-date it has been signed by 85 governments and ratified by Bulgaria and Trinidad and Tobago.

The Extraordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Parties established an open-ended *Ad hoc* Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (ICCP) to undertake the necessary preparations for the First Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

At its fifth meeting in Nairobi last May, the Conference of the Parties adopted a work plan for the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol (ICCP) in preparation for the first Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol and accorded high priority to the launch of the Biosafety Clearing-house no later than the entry into force of the Protocol and the need to undertake capacity building as soon as possible.

At its meeting in Montpellier last December, and as decided by the Conference of the Parties, the ICCP considered issues relevant to:

- i. Information sharing
- ii. Capacity building
- iii. Decision-making procedures
- iv. Handling, transport, packaging and identification
- v. Compliance

With regard to information sharing, the ICCP recommended actions to be taken inter-sessionally with the aim to establish the BCH in a phased manner beginning with a pilot phase. The ICCP set the objectives of the BCH, identified the characteristics of and the elements required to implement the pilot phase. The ICCP also made recommendations on the implementation of the pilot phase and adopted a project plan to ensure its timely implementation.

Following the ICCP meeting, the Secretariat spared no effort in initiating the implementation of the pilot phase and held discussions with a number of relevant organizations with the aim of identifying opportunities for collaboration.

This meeting is convened to review the status of implementation of the pilot phase, discuss technical issues associated with the implementation of the pilot phase and seek advice on future action.

To facilitate the deliberations of the Group, the Secretariat has prepared the provisional agenda before you and compiled a number of documents for use in your discussions.