



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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STATEMENT BY

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

TO

**THE OPEN-ENDED EXPERT MEETING ON CAPACITY
BUILDING FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CARTAGENA
PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY**

Havana, Cuba, 11 – 13 July 2001

Mr. Chairman

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I wish to welcome you all very warmly to this Open-ended Expert Meeting on Capacity-building for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. We are here in Havana as a result of the kind offer of the Government of Cuba, which was accepted with appreciation by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol when it met in Montpellier at the end of last year.

I would also like to thank the Governments of Canada, Denmark, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for their generous financial support to ensure a large participation in this meeting and its successful organization.

Mr. Chairman,

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety now has 104 signatures. In addition, there are now five countries that have deposited instruments of ratification or accession – Bulgaria, Fiji, Norway, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate those Governments for sending a clear signal of their commitment to the implementation of the Protocol. Noting the general desire for the first Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol to be held in conjunction with the

sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in The Hague in early April 2002, I would like to urge the other Parties to the Convention to ratify the Protocol as soon as possible.

For the most part, ratification is a unilateral process. Implementation of the Protocol, however, will be a two-way street, especially when it comes to the advance informed agreement procedure. On the one hand, exporting countries will have to provide the information necessary and comply with the other requirements of the Protocol. On the other hand, importing countries will have to analyse and interpret that information in order to arrive at an environmentally sound decision. For those countries to be able to do so, they will need to have the ability to assess the information that is provided and to reach and communicate decisions in a timely manner. Hence, the urgent need for capacity-building as a prerequisite for effective implementation of the Protocol. In this regard, it is widely accepted that capacity building must go beyond single, short interventions to encompass systematic, long-term efforts.

The scope of capacity building usually includes the assessment of needs, identification of options at the national and probably regional levels, the development and strengthening of relevant institutions, the enhancement of skills and expertise in human resources, establishment of necessary scientific and information management facilities and assessment for technology transfer. These and other areas of capacity building will have to be supported through the provision of financial resources and technical and scientific cooperation.

The urgent need for capacity building was therefore emphasized by the Conference of the Parties at its fifth meeting and reflected in the priorities set by the ICCP Bureau for the first meeting of that body. It is a requirement in order to allow countries to meet their legally binding obligations to provide certain categories of information immediately upon the entry into force for them of the Protocol and to permit Parties to make informed decisions about the import of LMOs, a matter that this at the heart of the Protocol.

The purpose of this Expert Meeting is to develop focused proposals for the consideration of ICCP at its second meeting. As requested by ICCP, the Secretariat prepared a questionnaire to assist in the submission of information on capacity-building needs, priorities and existing initiatives as well as suggestions on capacity-building for the implementation of the Protocol. That questionnaire, as well as the responses received, may be found in document UNEP/CBD/BS/EM-CB/1/2, which we have prepared for the present meeting. It complements the Secretariat document UNEP/CBD/ICCP/1/4 identifying the types of capacity required to implement the Protocol, as well as cross cutting requirements considered at the first meeting of ICCP in Montpellier last December.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those Governments and organizations that responded to the request for information and would urge all those that have not done so to make their voices heard at this meeting, so that we can benefit from as wide a range of experience and views as possible in order to develop practical and readily acceptable proposals.

Mr. Chairman,

The proposals that emerge from this meeting will be an important element for the second meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol. The agenda for that meeting is extremely crowded, and the work would be greatly facilitated if ICCP could, at the outset of its deliberations, have before it proposals on this urgent matter that are both focused and as all-inclusive as possible.

Finally, I wish to assure delegates, as always, of the full support of the Secretariat staff members during this meeting. We welcome your feedback on the organization and conduct of the meeting as it progresses and I assure you that no effort will be spared to ensure its full success. I would also assure you of the commitment of the Secretariat to play fully whatever role may be assigned to it in the efforts to put in place, in all countries, the capacity needed for the implementation of the Protocol.

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