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**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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STATEMENT BY

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

TO

**THE SECOND MEETING OF THE *ADHOC* OPEN-ENDED INTER-SESSIONAL
WORKING GROUP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 8(j) AND
RELATED PROVISIONS**

Montreal, Canada, 4 – 8 February 2002

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Representatives of the indigenous and local communities
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all to the second meeting of the *Ad hoc* Open-ended Inter-sessional Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

May I start by expressing my gratitude to the Governments of Canada and Spain for providing financial support that has enabled the participation of many indigenous and local-community representatives in this important meeting.

This week represents the first opportunity that the Working Group has had to review progress made in the implementation of the priority tasks in the first phase of the programme of work adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its fifth meeting. As you know, the programme of work was developed through a process that started with the 1997 Madrid Workshop on Traditional Knowledge and Biological Diversity and subsequently the first meeting of this Working Group, in Seville, in March 2000. At each stage of the process, including the consideration of the draft programme of work by the Conference of the Parties, the active participation of representatives of indigenous and local communities has been critical. This participation is fully in line with the decisions of the Conference of the Parties and principle 22 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, which recognizes the vital role Indigenous and local communities play in environmental management and development as a result of their knowledge and traditional practices.

Looking back over the past few years, we have indeed come a long way in a very short time in terms of developing new approaches towards involving indigenous peoples and local communities in the implementation of Article 8(j) and the related provisions of the Convention. I hope the spirit of collaboration which has made this progress possible will continue to prevail this week as we gather again to further advance and implement the mandate of the Working Group.

Indeed, the effective implementation of the mandate and, as a result, the implementation of Article 8(j) and its related provisions is essential to the achievement of the objectives of the Convention. The more we know about biodiversity, the more we realize the importance and pervasiveness of the interaction between indigenous and local communities and biodiversity. At the same time, the Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes and accepts that local and indigenous communities are central to its fundamental objectives.

This meeting also takes place at a very important time, only two months before the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and at a crucial point in the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The meeting thus gives you an opportunity not only of developing proposals for the Conference of the Parties but also

of making your voice heard in the preparations for the World Summit and of sending a strong message on how the implementation of Article 8(j) can contribute not only to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity but also to the achievement of sustainable development. You also have the chance to show the world that the Convention on Biological Diversity provides an effective forum for ensuring the respect for, preservation and maintenance of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices, and the promotion of their wider application.

If the spirit of collaboration between Parties and representatives of indigenous and local communities - most evident at Madrid and Seville - is maintained, then I believe that this objective will be achieved.

Turning more specifically to your agenda, the mandate of the Working Group, as set out in paragraph 9 of decision V/16 of the Conference of the Parties, is to review progress in the implementation of the priority tasks in the first phase of the programme of work adopted by the Conference of the Parties and to recommend further action to the Conference of the Parties on the basis of this review. You are also invited to consider progress in the implementation of the priority tasks in the thematic work programmes of the Convention in accordance with paragraph 8 of decision V/16.

As agreed by the Conference of the Parties, the priority tasks relate to five elements of the programme of work, namely:

- Participatory mechanisms for indigenous and local communities (tasks 1, 2 and 4);
- The preparation of a composite report on status and trends regarding traditional knowledge (task 5);
- Exchange and dissemination of information, in particular the identification of a focal point within the clearing-house mechanism to liaise with indigenous and local communities (task 8);
- Monitoring elements, in particular, the elaboration of guidelines for the conduct of cultural, environmental and social impact assessments regarding any development proposed to take place on sacred sites and on lands or waters occupied or used by indigenous and local communities (task 9);
- Legal elements, in particular the assessment of existing instruments, and particularly intellectual property instruments, that may have implications for the protection of traditional knowledge (task 11).

The Secretariat has prepared an overview of progress on each of these priority tasks, together with a number of more detailed background documents to assist you in your deliberations with regard to each agenda item. Also before you is a report on progress on the integration of relevant tasks of the programme of work into the thematic programmes of the Convention, as well as an information on their integration in the Convention's programmes on cross-cutting issues. These documents provide a framework that should enable you to focus, and make further progress on, the ambitious work programme adopted by the Conference of the Parties and, more generally, to the

specific issues that are before you at this meeting. The documents also contain draft recommendations, which you may wish to consider in your deliberations.

I am pleased to inform you that the report of the Open-ended Inter-sessional Meeting on the Strategic Plan, National Reports and Implementation of the Convention (MSP) which was held in Montreal last November is available at this meeting. The Secretariat would greatly appreciate your comments on the draft strategic Plan for the Convention as contained in the report. Your views on how it reflects the aims of the programme of work on Article 8(j) and the aspirations of the indigenous and local communities would be particularly welcome.

As always the Secretariat will be at your disposal throughout the week for any assistance you may need as you tackle your important agenda.

I look forward to a stimulating week of forthright and focused discussion and wish you all a successful meeting.

I thank you for your attention.