



**CONVENTION ON  
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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**STATEMENT BY  
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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
TO  
THE THIRD MEETING OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE  
FOR THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY**

The Hague, the Netherlands

22-26 April 2002

Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to the third meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. May I thank the Government of the Netherlands for their generous offer to host this meeting in conjunction with the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Governments of Germany, Japan, New Zealand, the Netherlands and Sweden, as well as the European Community, who have contributed financially to enable the participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

This meeting comes in the wake of the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, held here over the last two weeks. It also comes a matter of months before the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which has been convened to assess the achievements of the decade since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and map out the road ahead. This week therefore provides you with an opportunity to maintain the momentum that you have built up through Montpellier and Nairobi and to show the world that the Convention process, of which the Protocol is a part, is capable of handling new demands and challenges. In this respect, I would once again urge all Parties to the Convention to ratify the Protocol as soon as possible, preferably before the World Summit, so

that we can go to Johannesburg, knowing that the entry into force of the Protocol is imminent.

The meeting of the Conference of the Parties was the best attended ever, with representatives from 176 countries and over 500 organizations present. The high-level ministerial segment was attended by a remarkable 130 ministers. The Conference of the Parties sent out strong signals in support of the Cartagena Protocol. In particular, every goal adopted in the new Strategic Plan for the Convention includes an objective related to the Cartagena Protocol. The Protocol also features prominently in the message being sent to the World Summit on Sustainable Development by the Conference of the Parties and its high-level segment.

As you know cooperation with other organizations is a vital element in the implementation of the Protocol. It is very important at this stage to try to maximize complementarities and avoid possible conflicts. Accordingly, in its decision on cooperation, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to apply to the World Trade Organization for an observer status in the meetings of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and the Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade. In a similar spirit, the Conference of the Parties urged the Interim Commission on Phytosanitary Measures under the International Plant Protection Convention to ensure that the international standards for phytosanitary measures to be developed regarding LMOs are in harmony with the Cartagena Protocol.

On capacity-building, the Conference of the Parties decided that GEF should provide financial resources for national capacity-building in biosafety, in line with the recommendations made by this Committee at its second meeting. These include activities to enable effective participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House and in the Action Plan for Building Capacities of developing countries to prepare for the entry into force of the Protocol.

Of special interest to this Committee, as the preparatory body for the first COP/MOP, is the decision adopted on the arrangements for the holding of that meeting. Essentially, it was decided that, if the Protocol enters into force within the next twelve months, the first COP/MOP will be held in conjunction with an extraordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties. If entry into force is any later, the first COP/MOP will be held in conjunction with the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which will be held in Malaysia at the kind invitation of the Government of that country, and a further meeting of this Committee may be convened.

In the budget adopted for the biennium 2003-2004, the Conference of the Parties approved budget allocations for the biosafety programme of work, including the organization of the first COP/MOP. It also approved a contingency of \$250,000 to meet the costs if the second COP/MOP takes place back-to-back with the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in the event that the first COP/MOP does not decide on budgetary arrangements to that effect. As proposed by the ICCP at its second meeting, the Conference of the Parties also decided to establish, on a pilot phase basis, a trust fund to assist developing countries and countries with

economies in transition pay for the use of experts selected from the roster of experts on biosafety.

Mr. Chairman,

As you know, this week was initially set aside for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. Unfortunately, that meeting could not be held because the Protocol has not yet entered into force. However disappointing this might be for all of us, it does give this Committee an opportunity to further develop some of its proposals for the first COP/MOP.

The work accomplished to date by this Committee has been impressive. You have covered all the items in the work plan adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its fifth meeting, and have crafted a body of recommendations that would in itself serve as a firm basis for the first COP/MOP.

This is now the third meeting of this Committee, and items on your agenda are, I am sure, very familiar to you all. As decided by the Bureau, all the elements of your workplan are before you for further consideration. However, the Secretariat was requested to focus in preparing the documentation on items clearly requiring further consideration with a view to facilitating decision-making. Those elements are grouped under agenda item 4.1, while the other elements in the work plan are grouped under agenda item 4.2, and

no background documents have been prepared for them by the Secretariat.

Mr. Chairman,

A full report on inter-sessional activities undertaken by the Secretariat is before you and will be taken up later this morning. Suffice it to say at this juncture that the period since your last meeting has been an extremely busy one for the Secretariat. Let me, however, briefly highlight only a couple of these activities.

First, with regard to the Biosafety Clearing-House, which will be a vital component in the implementation process, the recommendations you made in Nairobi have been implemented. In addition, an independent review of the pilot phase was commissioned in January and completed in March this year, and its report is also available among the documentation before you. At this meeting, you may wish to provide additional guidance on its further development and on how to manage its transition from a pilot phase into a fully functional and accessible Biosafety Clearing-House when the Protocol enters into force. The pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House is now available on line in all United Nations languages, which should improve its accessibility and usefulness. We are also distributing a training version of the pilot phase on a CD-ROM in English only, one per delegation. This is a trial version of the CD and I would encourage your feedback and comments.

Thanks to the generous support from the United States of America and Japan, the Secretariat has organized two more regional meetings on the Biosafety Clearing-House—in Nitra, Slovakia, for Central and Eastern Europe, and in Beijing for Asia and the Pacific. With financial support from the United Kingdom, the Secretariat also organized a one-day hands-on training session on the operation of the pilot phase of the BCH for the African region in Nairobi last January.

The second activity that I would like to draw to your attention was the holding of two important technical expert meetings on Article 18, paragraph 2 of the Protocol, both of which took place in Montreal with the support of Canada, France, Japan and the United States. The reports of the meetings are before you and will be taken up under the relevant agenda item.

Mr. Chairman,

This meeting coincides with the launch of a new book entitled *The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety: Reconciling Trade in Biotechnology with Environment and Development*. The book is a comprehensive review of the protocol and the process that led to its adoption, starting in Jakarta and ending in Montreal, with stopovers in Aarhus, Montreal, Cartagena and Vienna. It includes contributions from many of the key negotiators and stakeholders, many of them well known to all of us. I am sure that the book will awaken many memories, in addition to providing an insider analysis of the background to the negotiations for the Protocol. I hope that this survey of the past, together with your achievements in Montpellier

and Nairobi, will provide some inspiration for your endeavours this week and beyond, as you move towards the completion of your task of preparing for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and all members of the ICCP Bureau for your continued support and guidance. I would also like to thank my colleagues, the staff of the Secretariat, for their hard work in ensuring that all the pre-session documents for this meeting were prepared on time in all languages under extreme time constraints.

Finally, I wish to assure delegates, as always, of the full support of the Secretariat's staff members during this meeting. I wish you all successful deliberations and look forward to the fruitful outcomes.

Thank you for your attention.