



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

Montreal, Canada, 8 – 12 November 2003

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

After this inspiring opening ceremony, I would like to join the President of the Conference of the Parties and welcome you all to the third meeting of the *Ad hoc* Open-ended Inter-sessional Working Group on Article 8(j) and related provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

I wish to thank the Government of Spain for its generous financial contribution that enabled the Secretariat to support the participation of many indigenous and local community representatives in this important meeting. For obvious reasons, an adequate level of indigenous and local communities' representation is essential to the success of this meeting.

I also wish to express our appreciation to the Governments of Canada, Finland, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom for their financial support to the participation of delegates from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

In decision VI/10, paragraph 7, the Conference of the Parties decided that one meeting of the *Ad hoc* Open-ended Inter-Sessional Working Group on Article 8(j) and related provisions be organized prior to the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties in order to ensure further advancement of the implementation of the work programme on Article 8(j) and related provisions. Based on this and other paragraphs of decision VI/10 and in accordance with the work programme adopted in decision V/16, this meeting is mandated to consider:

- **Composite report on the status and trends regarding the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities: the composite report before you is based on a series of regional reports prepared by consultants in accordance with the outline and the plan and timetable contained in the annex to decision VI/10;**

- **Guidelines for the conduct of cultural, environmental and social impact assessments regarding developments proposed to take place on sacred sites and on lands or waters traditionally occupied or used by indigenous and local communities: you will recall that a first set of recommendations on this issue was adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its sixth meeting; consistent with that decision, a set of draft guidelines is submitted for your consideration;**

- **Participatory mechanisms for indigenous and local communities: under this item, several approaches are proposed for the consideration of the Working Group with a view to ensuring the effective participation of indigenous and local communities in relevant decision-making processes relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity;**

- ***Sui generis* systems for the protection of the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity: under this item, the Working Group is invited to consider a set of issues relevant to *sui generis* systems for the protection of traditional knowledge in accordance paragraph 34 of decision VI/10.**

In accordance with paragraphs 4 and 6 of decision VI/10, this meeting will also review progress made in the implementation of the programme of work on Article 8(j) and related provisions, consider progress in the integration of the relevant tasks of the programme of work on Article 8(j) into each of the thematic areas of the Convention, and recommend further action to the Conference of the Parties.

In this connection, reports by Parties seem to indicate that high priority was given by countries, especially those with a large indigenous population, to the implementation of Article 8(j) and related provisions. Most of them are in the process of developing programmes and policies to promote the role of indigenous and local communities in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. In general, countries have started taking measures to ensure that the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities are respected, preserved and maintained.

However, the implementation of Article 8(j) and related provisions is still a challenge; the main problem identified by Parties being the lack of human, technical and financial resources to support implementation.

I therefore invite the meeting to take stock of the progress made so far and encourage the further implementation of elements of the work programme at the national level. I am sure you will agree that the success of our joint efforts depends entirely on their translation into practical results at the national level.

The importance of participatory mechanisms in decision-making processes affecting indigenous and local communities has been repeatedly emphasized by the Conference of the Parties. I invite you to examine this issue with a view to further strengthening the

involvement of indigenous and local community representatives in the work of the Convention.

In this connection, the active participation of representatives of indigenous and local communities in meetings under the Convention has been critical to the process so far. I invite all participants to be faithful to the spirit of collaboration that has characterized previous meetings of this Group, with a view to making recommendations to the Conference of the Parties on future action to further advance this important work programme.

To assist you with your deliberations, the Secretariat has prepared a number of background documents with regard to each agenda item. These documents provide a framework that, it is my hope, will enable you to focus and make further progress on the ambitious work programme adopted at the fifth meeting of 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 that you may wish to consider in your deliberations.

I look forward to stimulating discussions and wish you all a very successful meeting.

I thank you for your attention.