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**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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STATEMENT BY

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

TO

**SECOND MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
SERVING AS THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE CARTAGENA
PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY**

**Montreal, Canada
30 May – 3 June 2005**

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Since your first meeting, the ratification of the Biosafety Protocol has continued to gather momentum, with a further 35 Parties depositing their instruments, bringing the total to 119. The visibility of the Protocol has also increased due, to a large extent, to the forward-looking decisions adopted at your first meeting.

Distinguished Delegates,

Some 700 participants pre-registered for this meeting. In addition, the generous contributions of a number of countries have supported the participation of one representative from each developing country and country with an economy in transition Party to the Protocol. In this regard, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the following Governments: Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. I would also take this opportunity to thank all those who have provided financial and logistical support for the many inter-sessional activities, which have helped advance the implementation of your decisions and the objectives of the Protocol as a whole.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

The provisional agenda before you has been prepared on the basis of the issues identified in the medium-term programme of work for consideration at this meeting. It is therefore divided into two substantive sections, namely: standing issues and the substantive issues arising from the medium-term programme of work and previous decisions of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. For each agenda item, the Secretariat under the guidance of the Bureau and, in some cases, with extensive input from Governments, has prepared one or more documents, which I hope

will prove helpful in addressing the issues before you in a focused and expeditious manner.

Mr. President,

In the interest of time, I will focus in this statement on a number of the issues before you and, in particular, on developments in the inter-sessional period. A more detailed introduction and background information will be provided as and when the items concerned are taken up during the meeting.

I would first like to mention progress in the implementation and development of the **Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH)**, which is a key mechanism in the information-sharing provisions of the Protocol. It is a tool that carries with it both benefits—in that it enables Parties to access the information necessary for informed decision-making—and obligations—in that all Parties must provide the information required under the Protocol. Following the adoption of the modalities of operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House at your first meeting, the fully operational Biosafety Clearing-House was launched on 3 April 2004. Since that time, participation by Parties and other Governments in the operation of the BCH has continued to grow. This is especially important since the establishment of a fully functional and accessible Biosafety Clearing-House is essential for the fulfilment of commitments under the Protocol.

The Secretariat is continuing to work to improve the services provided by the central portal, taking into account the feedback from users and the advice from the Informal Advisory Committee of the BCH. Earlier this month, for example, we released some new features to assist users, and the BCH databases currently contain close to 7,000 records. Under the agenda item on information-sharing, you will be considering a proposal on the longer-term programme of work for the BCH developed by the Secretariat, based on, among other things, the input of the Informal Advisory Committee.

Continued efforts are being made to enable all Parties to provide the required information to the BCH in order to facilitate the sharing of information

on, and experience with, living modified organisms. Over the last two days, the Secretariat organized a training workshop for national BCH focal points from some 35 Parties that are not currently receiving assistance from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to access and use the BCH. This workshop is part of the efforts of the Secretariat to assist Governments in using the central portal. I would like to take this opportunity to thank most sincerely the Government of the Netherlands and the Global Industry Coalition for their generous financial support for this workshop and for other capacity-building activities to facilitate participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House. I would also like to thank the UNEP/GEF biosafety team for their collaboration.

The first meeting of the COP-MOP requested all Parties and encouraged other Governments to nominate national focal points for the BCH to liaise with the Secretariat regarding issues of relevance to the development and implementation of the BCH. So far, close to 100 such focal points have been nominated. I would like to call on those Parties and other Governments that have not yet responded to this request to do so as soon as possible; it is important that the continued development of the BCH benefits from broad national participation and takes into account the needs of all Parties.

Distinguished delegates,

Capacity-building is another issue that I would like to highlight. Capacity-building has always been recognized as one of the main issues to be addressed in order to promote effective implementation. It remains a top priority to enable the viable operation of the Protocol and the fulfilment of the commitments undertaken by Parties. The comprehensive Action Plan for Capacity-Building adopted at your last meeting includes, among other tools to assist in its implementation, a Coordination Mechanism for ensuring partnerships, complementarities and mutual synergies between various capacity-building initiatives. The inter-sessional period saw a number of activities which will contribute to the implementation of that Coordination Mechanism.

First, a coordination meeting of academic institutions offering biosafety-related training and education programmes took place in Geneva from 4 to 6 October 2004 with generous support from the Government of Switzerland. This was the first time that relevant institutions were brought together to discuss how they could effectively respond to the biosafety training needs of countries and how to support the effective implementation of the Protocol. The meeting developed a compendium of existing biosafety training and education programmes, which has been made available through the Biosafety Clearing-House.

In January this year, a coordination meeting was held in Montreal for Governments and organizations implementing or funding biosafety capacity-building activities. The meeting brought together some 40 participants and established operational procedures to guide such meetings in the future. It also adopted operational modalities for the Biosafety Capacity-Building Network and established a Steering Committee to oversee activities of the Network. By providing various players with an opportunity to share information and experiences on their activities on a regular basis, this Network will be an important tool in promoting synergies, complementarities and avoiding duplication of effort. The Secretariat has established a restricted portal in the Biosafety Clearing-House through which members of the Network can share information and keep each other informed of their activities.

The Liaison Group on Capacity-Building for Biosafety also met here in Montreal in January. It provided expert advice to the Secretariat on a number of issues, including on ways to enhance implementation of the Coordination Mechanism. It also provided comments on the draft terms of reference for the comprehensive review of the Action Plan for Capacity-building, which you will be taking up at a later stage of this meeting. For Parties to implement their obligations under the Protocol, capacity-building remains a top priority in the immediate future.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

Documentation and **identification** of LMOs is another major item on the agenda of this meeting. Following the request made at your last meeting, a workshop on capacity-building and exchange of experiences on the safe handling, transport, packaging and identification of living modified organisms was convened in Bonn in November last year in preparation for the meeting of the Open-ended Technical Expert Group established to examine the issues of identification mentioned in the second sentence of paragraph 2 (a) of Article 18. The workshop provided a valuable opportunity to exchange information and experiences on the implementation of Article 18.2. It also helped improve mutual understanding and appreciation of the requirements and associated capacity-building needs involved in the identification of LMOs. I would like to thank the Government of Germany for the generous offer to host the meeting and the European Community and the Government of Canada for their additional financial contributions.

The Open-ended Technical Expert Group itself met in March this year. Its mandate was to prepare a draft decision for consideration by this meeting regarding the elaboration of detailed identification requirements for living modified organisms intended for direct use as food or feed, or for processing.

Although the Open-ended Technical Expert Group was unable to reach consensus on a draft decision, it nevertheless proved a useful forum for discussion and enabled Parties and other stakeholders to have a better understanding of the main issues and the various views and positions. The report of that meeting contains a Chair's text which, I believe, constitutes a good starting point to build on and reach agreement on the subject, as provided for in the Protocol. Mr. François Pythoud will report to you on this issue in his capacity as Chair of the meeting.

Distinguished Delegates,

Another important activity that took place in the inter-sessional period was the first meeting of the **Compliance Committee**. The main purpose of the meeting was to develop the Committee's rules of procedure for consideration and approval at this meeting. The Compliance Committee elected its first Chairperson, Mr. Veit Koester, who will introduce the report of the meeting of the Committee under the relevant agenda item.

Finally, Mr. President, I would like to turn to the issue of **liability and redress**. You will recall that, in decision BS-I/8 and as envisaged in Article 27 of the Protocol, the Parties established a process for the elaboration of international rules and procedures in the field of liability and redress for damage resulting from transboundary movements of living modified organisms. Accordingly, in October last year, a Technical Group of Experts was convened with financial support from the United Kingdom to undertake preparatory work for the first meeting of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts on Liability and Redress under the Biosafety Protocol. That first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group was held here last week, and the Co-Chair of the Group, Mr. René Lefeber, will be reporting to you on the progress achieved.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

Allow me to mention at this juncture that one major input to the discussions of your third meeting will be the first interim national report that all Parties are expected to submit two years after the entry into force of the Protocol, that is, by 11 September this year. These interim reports will be an essential tool for assessing the progress achieved so far in the implementation of the Protocol and in identifying difficulties that Parties may be encountering, so that remedial measures can be proposed. It is my hope that all Parties will submit their interim national reports within the stipulated timeframe. This will enable the Secretariat to prepare a synthesis report that is as comprehensive as possible for consideration at your next meeting, to be held in Brazil in March next year.

Before concluding my statement, I would like to thank the members of the Bureau for the guidance and support they provided to the Secretariat during the inter-sessional period and in the preparation for this meeting. I also would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues, the staff members of the Secretariat for their hard work in ensuring that all pre-session documents for this meeting were prepared on time in all languages.

Finally, as always, I wish to assure all delegates of the full support of the Secretariat staff 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 wish you much success in your deliberations and a productive meeting.

Thank you for your attention.
