



Secretariat of the Convention
on Biological Diversity

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIODIVERSITY
PROTECT BIODIVERSITY IN DRYLANDS

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ACHIEVING THE 2010 TARGET!

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BY

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

TO THE

**THIRD MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY SERVING AS THE
MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON
BIOSAFETY**

Curitiba, Brazil, 13 March

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 1992, at the Earth Summit, over 101 Heads of State and Government witnessed the birth of the Convention on Biological Diversity—the Convention on Life on Earth. They adopted the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21, including its chapter 16 on the environmentally sound management of biotechnology.

The Convention on Biological Diversity embodies the spirit of the Rio Summit. It recognizes the need for, and the potential benefits of, biotechnology. It recognizes at the same time the need for adequate safety measures to avoid or minimize the potential risks of biotechnology to human health and environment. Articles 16 and 19 of the Convention encourage access to and transfer of technologies, including biotechnology, that can benefit the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. On the other hand, the same Article 19 seek to ensure the development of appropriate procedures to enhance the safety of biotechnology in the context of the threefold objectives of the Convention.

In the early hours of the morning of 29 January 2000 in Montreal, the world witnessed a major event: the birth of the Protocol on Biosafety. After five years of complex and difficult negotiations on an international instrument, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety came into being.

It was a moment of great significance for the implementation of the Convention and the advancement of the goal of sustainable development. The Cartagena Protocol is one of the most important materializations of the spirit of the Rio Declaration and chapter 16 of Agenda 21. The Protocol makes a significant contribution to ensuring that major technological advances can be achieved while respecting human health and environment. It is a unique tool designed to provide transparent and safe procedures so as to reap the full potential that modern biotechnology has and should offer for the socio-economic welfare and prosperity of mankind. Modern biotechnology does indeed hold great promise for addressing the food challenges facing humankind. The Cartagena Protocol provides the institutional framework for fulfilling this potential.

It is therefore gratifying to note, that only five months after its adoption, the Protocol was opened for signature in Nairobi, in May 2000. Some 30 months later,

on 11 September 2003, the Protocol entered into force. At that occasion, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan stated that:

“The Protocol establishes a framework that will facilitate environmentally sound application and management of the products of modern biotechnology. It will enable us to derive maximum benefits from biotechnology while at the same time protecting biodiversity and human health from potential risks posed by living modified organisms”.

Six months later, in Kuala Lumpur in February 2004, the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol was convened. The second meeting followed in Montreal in late May/early June 2005. Here we are today in Curitiba, less than nine months since that time, gathered for your third meeting.

It is a matter of great satisfaction to note that while measures are being taken to take full advantage of the potential benefits arising from modern biotechnology, the international community has at the same time stepped up its endeavours to enhance collaboration in addressing all issues related to biosafety, including potential risk for the environment. The speed and the number of ratifications of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety are a case in point. Since your last meeting, nine months ago, nineteen additional Parties have joined the Protocol. The impressive work undertaken in a very short period of time in operationalizing the provisions of this unique legal instrument and translating them into reality is unprecedented.

Let me, therefore, pay a vibrant tribute to the 130 Parties of the Protocol as of today, who will be joined very soon by two additional ones, for their strong political will. I would also call on those countries that have not yet done so to expedite their internal process of ratification or accession to ensure the largest universal membership to what has been hailed as the first new legal environmental instrument of the twenty-first century.

Such a result would not have been possible without the unique contribution of Malaysia as the President of the first MOP. Under the leadership of Malaysia, 28 major decisions have been adopted and some 17 inter-sessional meetings have been convened. The results are on the table. Let me, therefore, pay tribute to Malaysia and invite you Mme Chair to convey our gratitude to the Malaysian authorities for this remarkable achievement. I would like also to convey my gratitude to all donors for making available a total of \$1.3 million to finance the participation of developing countries and economies in transition in the Protocol processes since its first meeting, including our meeting today. Those donors are: Austria, Brazil, Canada,

Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Fourteen years after the birth of the Convention at the Rio Summit, with the participation of 101 Heads of State and Government, we are back in Brazil for the largest ever gathering under the Protocol with more than 1,600 pre-registered delegates representing 116 Parties and 39 observers.

I would like to pay tribute to the Government and the people of Brazil under the able leadership of their President, His Excellency Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, for their unique contribution in promoting the multilateral cooperation for sustainable development. I would like to express our deep and sincere gratitude to the Minister of Environment of Brazil, Ms. Marina Silva, for her personal and untiring commitment and efforts to arrange for this meeting. The informal consultation convened at the initiative of Brazil last Friday has demonstrated that the elements of an historical meeting here in Curitiba are in motion. I would like to convey to the Brazilian authorities and in particular to ITAMARATY my deep gratitude for this initiative.

Mayor Carlos Alberto Richa in your address you invited us to feel at home. Here in Curitiba we feel indeed at home. We feel as if we have come home after a 14-year-long journey. In doing so, we are following the path of many species that go back to the place of their birth in order to breed to ensure the continuity of their species. The Protocol emerged out of the Convention. The law of nature requires that Cartagena Protocol will also give birth here to its Curitiba child—a set of expected decisions including on detailed documentation requirements for the identification of shipments of living modified organisms intended for direct use as food or feed, or for processing as envisaged under paragraph 2 (a) of Article 118. In doing so we shall respond collectively to yesterday message of Governor Roberto Requião who called for the establishment of new conscience at the service of Nature and its children. But let us be clear that the Curitiba outcomes will not be possible without the establishment of a new form of strategic partnership between Governments and their partners, including the civil society, the indigenous and local communities, the scientific networks and the private sector

I would like also to thank the Governor of the State of Paraná and the Mayor of Curitiba for their achieving and for sharing their vision with the world. Indeed, Mr. Mayor you are right the world can be found in Curitiba and I can add that the

world has found Curitiba. And why should the world not reconcile itself with its destiny in Curitiba, a destiny that cannot be dissociated from Nature?

Yesterday at the Memorial of Curitiba near the symbolic river of Pineas we were reminded of the wisdom of Governor and Mayor Jaime Lerner, who said “If we forget our identity, we are denying ourselves”. We all know that our identity is linked to nature.

In the same memorial, we saw the mural painting recalling the history of Brazil and its great people with a mirror at the bottom. I asked the Prefecto why a mirror and he responded that the mirror was designed so that any visitors contemplating the painting reflecting the history of Brazil would see themselves as part of this history.

Ladies and gentlemen, your decisions at the end of this meeting will be your mirror of the history of this Protocol.

Let a new page of the Protocol be written here in Curitiba and, by doing so, let us be guided by the motto of the City of Curitiba, “*A Cidade da Gente*”—the city of all the people. Let us therefore ensure that your decisions at the end of this week will be decisions for the benefit of all people of the planet and future generations without exception.

I thank you all for your kind attention.