

STATEMENT BY DR AHMED DJOGLAF
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on the occasion of the
FIRST MEETING OF THE AD HOC TECHNICAL EXPERT GROUP ON
RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
20 – 24 APRIL, 2009 – MONTREAL, CANADA

**Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you here today for the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Risk Assessment and Risk Management.

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety commits to Parties the key task of identifying and evaluating possible adverse effects of living modified organisms before making decisions on their use. While Annex III of the Protocol provides important guidance on the risk assessment process, the Parties have identified some key areas where further work could assist them in adequately conducting risk assessment in accordance with the Protocol.

At their fourth meeting – held in Bonn, the German city of the United Nations – the Parties to the Protocol recognized the need for action for developing guidance materials on risk assessment. The Parties called for the convening of an Open-ended Online Expert Forum as well as an Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) in order to ensure the wide participation and consultation of experts. The Online Forum provided one of the inputs to this first meeting of the AHTEG and has been an effective contribution to the process established by the Parties.

The innovative use of online tools, in allowing wider consultations also ensures costs effectiveness. As you can see from the documents before you, these first real-time online conferences brought together the world's foremost experts on risk assessment of LMOs from 51 countries, and resulted in over 900 interventions.

Distinguished delegates,

This meeting being an important milestone, your deliberations over the next five days will define the success of the entire process. I have no doubt, given the strength of the expertise here and the level of commitment you have all demonstrated to date, that during the next five days and in the coming months, you will work hard to fulfil the mandate of the Group with the view to helping Parties implement sound risk assessments of LMOs and their follow-up management strategies. I invite you to maintain this participative approach mandated by the Parties and engage other colleagues who may provide specific expertise on the issues under discussion as much as possible in the work ahead.

The outcome of the entire process will be presented to the fifth meeting of the Parties, to be held in Nagoya, Japan in October 2010, for their consideration. I am confident that your work will become an essential component for the effective implementation of the Protocol at a global level.

With that in mind, I wish you very fruitful deliberations and a most successful meeting.

Thank you for your kind attention.
