



**Latin American and Caribbean Indigenous and Local Community Capacity-building
Workshop on the Convention on Biological Diversity, including issues relevant to
Article 8(j), TK and ABS: Mesoamerican Region
Guatemala City, Guatemala, 4 - 6 March 2010**

Mr. Luis Ferrate, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources,
Ms. Claudia Santizo Arroyo, Executive Secretary of the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP),
Abuelo Cirilo Perez Oxlaj, Ambassador of Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala,
Ms. Florina Lopez Miro, Representative of the Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaf, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), sends you his sincere greetings and expresses his deep appreciation to the Government of Guatemala for hosting this important event and for the warm welcome. He also sends his apologies for being unable to be here today at the opening of this important event, but has asked me to say a few words on his behalf.

The Secretariat of the CBD is pleased to begin this fourth workshop on capacity-building for indigenous and local communities in the sub-region of Mesoamerica, being convened thanks to the generous support of the Government of Spain, the collaboration of the local member organizations of the Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network, and the National Council of Protected Areas. We thank them all for their continued support.

We are very delighted and honoured that the workshop is being held here in Guatemala City, in the heart of the Mesoamerican subregion; in a country with such biological, cultural and linguistic diversity; a place where the Maya people developed their calendar and their wise advice on the care of Mother Earth.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At its ninth meeting, held in Bonn, in May 2008, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention adopted several decisions relevant to effective participation and capacity building of indigenous and local communities in the work of the Convention. In particular, paragraph 1 of decision IX/13 D and paragraph 7 of decision IX/13 E are concentrated on providing capacity-building initiatives to ensure effective participation of indigenous and local communities in the work of the Convention. At the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the Government

of Guatemala played a key role in the adoption of these decisions, pursuant to which, we are pleased to begin the fourth workshop as part of the series of capacity-building workshops for indigenous and local communities in the Mesoamerican subregion.

The workshop aims specifically at strengthening the knowledge of representatives of indigenous and local communities, particularly women, and providing expertise on the Convention on Biological Diversity and thus achieving their full and effective participation in the process leading to the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 10) to be held in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010.

We are now at a crucial point in the life of the Convention as it addresses two very important issues for indigenous peoples: 1) the negotiation of an international regime on access and benefit-sharing, and 2) the work plan of the Working Group on Article 8(j) and related provisions of the Convention.

Indigenous and local communities in the countries of Mesoamerica, whose territories harbour great biological, cultural, and linguistic wealth, contain important reservoirs of biological diversity. With their traditional knowledge, their ancestral wisdom, biodiversity has been preserved, maintained and even restored. Therefore, their participation in the meetings under the Convention is very important to contribute their knowledge and suggestions on how to take care of our Mother Nature- the biodiversity.

As always, the Secretariat of the CBD is ready to facilitate the participation of indigenous and local communities in the work of the Convention and we hope that after these days of learning together we will soon be able to count on your participation in the meetings under the Convention and that the AJAW will guide us in doing so.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.
