

Statement by Mr. Ahmed Djoghla
Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity
on the occasion of the
Pre-COP10-MOP5 Citizen Forum – Social Sustainability and Biological Safety
Policy Reactions & Public Participation
Nagoya, Japan, 9 October 2010

Distinguished participants,

Please allow me to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to the organizers of this significant event for having invited me to say some opening remarks. The participation of a wide variety of stakeholders in discussions at the Conference of the Parties and the meeting of the Parties is crucial to ensuring that the decisions to be adopted reflect the will and the diversity of the wider world. Forums such as this one enable people to engage in the issues and develop an understanding and appreciation of our common goal of protecting life on Earth.

As you know, 2010 has been declared the International Year of Biodiversity by the United Nations General Assembly. We began the Year with launch events in Tokyo, Paris, New York, Curitiba, New Delhi and Berlin. Since then, we have:

- celebrated the International Day for Biodiversity in Nairobi, Kenya, the African headquarters of the United Nations;
- commemorated the extinction of species through the ringing of bells around the world with the Mass Extinction Memorial Observatory;
- celebrated the International Year of Biodiversity with hundreds of people in Siem Reap, Cambodia; and
- held a high level event on biodiversity during the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

There have also been thousands of events and activities held in countries around the world. From Muonio, Finland in the north, to Dunedin, New Zealand in the south; from here in Nagoya to the Rocky Mountains in western Canada; from Algeria to Zimbabwe, people have been celebrating the International Year of Biodiversity.

We will close the Year in Kanazawa, Japan. But the 31st of December 2010 will not be the end of our work to protect and conserve biological diversity. As we have seen, the 2010 target to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss has not been met and we still have much to do to safeguard the irreplaceable natural wealth of biodiversity that is vital for current and future human well-being.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The immediate task before us is the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. There are 21 items on the agenda for COP-MOP 5. The ambitious agenda includes:

- the adoption of a supplementary protocol on liability and redress;
- the adoption of the first Strategic Plan for the Biosafety Protocol;
- the endorsement of guidance on risk assessment for living modified organisms; and
- the adoption of the first programme of work on public awareness and participation.

I am happy to see that you have already taken to heart the need for activities on public awareness and participation through your involvement in this Citizens' Forum. Indeed, many of you have been engaged in activities under the Protocol over the past two years and beyond. I see many familiar faces from capacity-building meetings, negotiations on liability and redress, and the *Ad hoc* Technical Expert Group on Risk Assessment and Risk Management. I applaud you for your dedication and commitment to Biosafety and the Cartagena Protocol.

Participation in activities under the Biosafety Protocol has also taken a number of novel forms over the past two years. A number of decisions adopted by the Parties at their fourth meeting called for the use of online communication tools to further discussions on different topics under the Protocol. We have used online discussions forums and real-time online conferences to exchange views on:

- capacity-building;
- risk assessment;
- the handling, transport, packaging and identification of living modified organisms;
- the Biosafety Clearing-House; and
- the Strategic Plan.

These new tools have proved highly successful with over 700 participants taking part in the different discussions. Even the volcanic eruption in Iceland last spring became an opportunity to innovate! Those who were unable to travel to the face-to-face meeting of the AHTEG on risk assessment were able to take part through Skype.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The fifth meeting of the Parties to the Biosafety Protocol promises to draw unprecedented attention on the world stage. In addition to the hundreds of delegates who will be representing their countries in the negotiations, over 500 observers and more than 1,500 media representatives have pre-registered for the event. We must take advantage of the opportunity before us to adopt decisions that ensure the strength of the Biosafety Protocol for years to come.

The large number of participants is only possible through the support provided by the Government of Japan. They have been organizing this meeting for the past two years and have demonstrated an unprecedented level of commitment to ensuring its success. I wish to pay tribute to their dedication and involvement.

Distinguished participants,

You have been busy exploring the scientific aspects of Biosafety over the past few days and this afternoon, you will have a discussion with a distinguished panel of speakers. I am sure your deliberations will lead to some interesting outcomes. I look forward to the conclusions being presented during the meeting of the Parties next week. It is with your commitment that support for the Biosafety Protocol continues to grow. We must all continue to work together to protect life on Earth.

Thank you very much.
