



STATEMENT

BY

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE
OPENING SESSION OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE**

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

HYDERABAD, INDIA

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**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

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Madame President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you to the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. As you know, I assumed the position of Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, including this Protocol, in February of this year and since then, I have immersed myself in the promises and challenges of these treaties.

I am not the only newcomer in the time since COP-MOP-5. The Protocol has welcomed three new Parties – Bahrain, Morocco and Uruguay – in 2011 and 2012. We also received word last week that Jamaica has just ratified the Protocol, which will bring the total number of Parties to 164. Furthermore, the Czech Republic, Latvia and Mexico have ratified the Nagoya – Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress and we have heard from a number of other countries that they are in the process of preparing their instruments of ratification. As you know, liability and redress is one of the items on the agenda for this week’s meeting and we look forward to hearing about countries’ efforts to join the Supplementary Protocol so that it may enter into force as quickly as possible.

Distinguished delegates,

Hyderabad is known as the “City of Pearls” and I am certain that there are many grains of sand on our agenda that are waiting to be cultured into gems during our meeting this week.

One of the key items for our consideration is risk assessment and risk management. At your fourth meeting, you created an innovative process that incorporated online discussions and An Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group. You extended this process at your fifth meeting and the

participants have been hard at work since then. You have the outcome before you: the revised and expanded Guidance on Risk Assessment of Living Modified Organisms. Now it is for you to take the Guidance home and use it in your domestic implementation of the Protocol.

The Ad Hoc Technical Experts Group on Risk Assessment and Risk Management has also proposed that further work be undertaken to develop guidance on new topics such as risk assessment of living modified microorganisms, viruses, animals and fish, and LMOs produced through synthetic biology. As the science of biotechnology continues to develop, I have no doubt you will consider these suggestions carefully in your deliberations this week.

In contrast to the long history of work on risk assessment, we have the agenda item on socio-economic considerations. This is a much newer issue for COP-MOP. It has been considered in the context of research and information exchange in the past but your last meeting was the first time inter-sessional work on socio-economic considerations in decision-making was mandated. The results of the inter-sessional work are before you. They recognize that this is an area of great interest for many countries but also an area in which they are struggling and would benefit from discussions at the international level. It is for you to decide on the next steps to be taken on this issue.

Dear colleagues,

The second national reports under the Biosafety Protocol were due in September 2011. We are very pleased with the reporting rate – to date, 146 of the 161 Parties who had an obligation to submit a report have done so. This represents a reporting rate of over 90%. The high reporting rate was essential for providing up-to-date information on a number of issues under the Protocol and for establishing baselines against which progress towards achieving the objectives of the Strategic Plan can be measured.

I would be remiss if I did not thank the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for their roles in the high rate of submission of the second national reports. By expediting access to funding for countries to complete their national reports and submit them by the deadline, GEF and UNEP contributed greatly to the high rate of reporting. I hope we can count on them to provide similar such support in the future.

This meeting of COP-MOP is also scheduled to undertake the second assessment and review of the Protocol. At your last meeting, you decided that the scope of the second assessment and review would focus primarily on evaluating the status of implementation of core elements of the Protocol. A great deal of work has been done to this end and the information from the second national reports has again been vital in the evaluation process and in setting the baseline for subsequent assessment and review processes.

In examining the status of implementation, one of the conclusions is that many Parties remain at a relatively early stage in the implementation of their national biosafety frameworks. The Compliance Committee has also noted that the obligation to put in place legal, administrative and other measures necessary for the implementation of the Protocol continues to be a general issue of compliance among Parties to the Protocol. I urge you to renew your efforts towards full implementation of the Cartagena Protocol so that the possible benefits from living modified organisms may be obtained in a way that does not adversely affect our rich biological diversity.

While there will undoubtedly be differences of opinion on the issues we have to consider, I trust that you can come together and wrap any such differences in the beautiful shell of compromise and common understanding. In this way, we will make our own string of Hyderabad pearls when we adopt our decisions at the end of this week.

Distinguished delegates,

Two years ago we met in the beautiful city of Nagoya, Japan. I wish to pay tribute to the outgoing President of COP-MOP, Mr. Akira Gunji, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, as well as his deputy, Mr. Masamichi Saigo. Japan has been very active in its role as President, attending meetings, offering guidance and supporting activities under the Biosafety Protocol. We are extremely grateful for the leadership they have provided over the past two years.

Now we are gathered in Hyderabad, India under the banner “Nature Protects if She is Protected”. The Government of India has been hard at work over the past two years planning and preparing for this meeting. During this time, they have hosted a number of meetings under the Convention and the Protocol, culminating this week in the sixth meeting of the Parties to the Biosafety Protocol and, beginning next week, the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

Indian hospitality is legendary and I am sure I speak for everyone here, Madame President, when I say that we are all looking forward to our time here in India and the opportunity to experience the amazing biological and cultural diversity of your country. I assure you that your commitment as host of this meeting will contribute to a successful outcome and the pearls we will have created by the end of the week.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Approximately eleven months from now, we will mark the ten-year anniversary of the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. We have come a long way in these ten years and the Protocol has matured and developed during this time. We have made great progress in developing the Biosafety Clearing-House as an innovative tool for information exchange; in providing detailed guidance on risk assessment for LMOs and in creating rules on liability and redress for damage caused by the transboundary movement of LMOs. We can also see the road ahead for the next ten years of the Protocol as captured in the Strategic Plan adopted by COP-MOP-5.

I congratulate you on the progress made. But I also urge you to maintain your efforts. A great deal of work remains to be done in order to implement the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The

safe application of modern biotechnology, and informed and transparent decision-taking in the transfer, use and release of living modified organisms as required by the Biosafety Protocol need to continue to be an integral part of the Convention on Biological Diversity and as part of our resolve for sustainable development and the “Future We Want” for which we all renewed our commitment at Rio+20.

We must remain vigilant and not lose sight of the most precious pearl of all – our biodiversity.

I thank you for your attention.