



STATEMENT BY

MR. BRAULIO FERRERA DE SOUZA DIAS

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

to the

**EIGHTH MEETING OF THE AD HOC OPEN-ENDED WORKING
GROUP ON ARTICLE 8(j) AND RELATED PROVISIONS**

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**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
United Nations Environment Programme
413 Saint-Jacques Street, Suite 800, Montreal, QC, H2Y 1N9, Canada
Tel : +1 514 288 2220 Fax : +1 514 288 6588
secretariat@cbd.int www.cbd.int



Distinguished delegates,

First, I would like to extend my deep appreciation to Mr. Kenneth Deer and his colleagues from the Mohawk community for allowing us to benefit from their wisdom and for sharing with us their rich cultural heritage, which is rooted in this land. It serves as a reminder that we all have much to gain from recognizing and making use of traditional knowledge relevant in our efforts to achieve the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

I take this opportunity to also thank the Governments of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, India, Korea, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland for their generous support for the participation of a large number of representatives of developing countries and Parties with economies in transition in this meeting, as well as representatives of indigenous and local communities.

Distinguished delegates,

As you know, the Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions boasts many tangible achievements over the years since its establishment at the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties held in Bratislava in 1998.

They include the development of tools, such as the *guidelines for the conduct of cultural, environmental and social impact assessments for developments on land traditionally occupied by indigenous and local communities* and the *Code of Ethical Conduct on respect for the cultural and intellectual heritage of indigenous and local communities*, and many other concrete achievements that have ensured that appropriate attention and focus is given to traditional knowledge under the Convention process.

But most importantly, the Working Group has raised the profile of indigenous and local community issues in the framework of the Convention and beyond and has given the indigenous and local communities an opportunity to contribute actively to the work of the Convention for the benefit of all.

A most significant example of Article 8(j) as a cross-cutting issue is demonstrated through the programme of work on protected areas and the increasing recognition of community conservation areas and their potential contribution to Aichi Biodiversity Target 11:

By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

Looking ahead, I invite you to bear in mind the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Targets in your work this week. Specifically, your work on Article 10(c) - customary sustainable use - stands to contribute to the achievement of Target 18, which provides that:

By 2020, the traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities and their customary use of biological resources are respected [...] and fully integrated and reflected in the implementation of the Convention with the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities, at all relevant levels.

The plan of action on customary sustainable use that you are invited to consider could also potentially contribute to poverty alleviation, the recognition of the value of ecosystems services and to discussions on sustainable development within the framework of the post 2015 development agenda. I hope that the draft plan of action before you can be finalized at this meeting and recommended for adoption at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. This would be a significant new milestone in our work.

Secondly, the Working Group will also consider tasks 7, 10 and 12 of the programme of work, which may assist in the effective implementation of the Convention, particularly as a complement to the Nagoya Protocol. This work includes guidelines to report and prevent the unlawful appropriation of traditional knowledge and guidelines to ensure that traditional knowledge is used based on prior informed consent and equitable sharing of benefits. In this regard, the Secretariat is proposing a pragmatic way forward that would avoid overlap and duplication. I hope that you will consider this approach positively.

With respect to task 12, which calls for the Working Group to develop guidelines to assist Parties in the development of legislation or other mechanisms to implement Article 8(j) and its related provisions, such mechanisms could take the form of national action plans, which may assist Parties in incorporating new elements into revisions of NBSAPs. This may appeal to Parties who prefer practical ways forward.

The Working Group is also invited to consider task 15 on repatriation of traditional knowledge, on the basis of the practical draft guidelines provided in the documentation for the meeting aimed at knowledge restoration for biodiversity. Should the Working Group reach consensus on the draft guidelines, their possible adoption could be recommended to the Conference of the Parties. However, should further consideration be required, you may wish to recommend the establishment of an expert group to further consider the matter.

Distinguished delegates,

My colleagues in the Secretariat and I are working tirelessly to continually review and improve our processes. To that end, you will find that the agenda for this meeting has been streamlined and focusses on key areas which need to advance to allow us to achieve Aichi Biodiversity Target 18 by 2020. You will also note that, in general, shorter draft decisions have been submitted for your consideration.

It is our hope that this will give the Working Group more time to focus on the substantive issues. Please bear in mind that decisions need not be repeated at every biennium as their implementation is not limited in time. Instead, I invite you to strive to implement, and build on, existing active decisions. Most importantly, I would like to provide Parties and participants with more time for the sharing of experiences and good practice in implementation. This may greatly assist us in achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

In closing, while you are in Montreal, Canadians will celebrate Thanksgiving! On this special day, which is celebrated on the second Monday of October every year, Canadians give “thanks” for a successful harvest: the gift of nature. This tradition goes back thousands of years. Indeed, long before the first European settlers came to this continent, it was traditional in many Native American cultures to offer an official giving of thanks for the good crops during autumnal gatherings.

In Haudenosaunee culture – the name the Iroquois call themselves - a prayer is recited to honor “the three sisters” - beans, corn and squash - during the fall harvest.

It is fitting that Thanksgiving should coincide with our meetings. It reminds us of the benefits that nature’s biological diversity so generously bestows upon us year after year. In return, it is our duty to ensure that we respect nature, cherish and preserve its diversity and that its benefits are shared fairly and equitably among us all.

I thank you for your attention.
