



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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STATEMENT BY

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

TO

**THE EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE
GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY**

Washington, D.C., USA, 5 – 7 December 2001

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Chief Executive Officer,
Distinguished members of the Council,
Colleagues,

I am honoured to have the opportunity to address the GEF Council today on behalf of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The period since your last meeting has seen a number of significant advances on various fronts. Summary information of these developments is contained in the document prepared by your Secretariat, entitled "Relations with Conventions" (GEF/C.18/3). I would like, therefore, to focus on four major intergovernmental meetings organized during that period, since the recommendations they produced will doubtless have a significant bearing on the formulation of further guidance to the financial mechanism by the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. They are:

- The second meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (ICCP-2) held in Nairobi in early October,
- The meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing, which was held in Bonn at the end of October,
- The seventh meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-7) held in Montreal in November, and
- The Open-ended Inter-Sessional Meeting on the Strategic Plan, National Reports and the Implementation of the Convention (MSP) held in Montreal immediately after the SBSTTA meeting.

Let me first turn to the second meeting of the ICCP, which produced thirteen recommendations for the attention of the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. The recommendations of direct relevance to GEF have already been communicated to the GEF secretariat and concern primarily capacity-building and guidance to the financial mechanism.

As far as capacity-building is concerned, ICCP adopted an Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Protocol and invited Governments and organizations to start implementing it. It also recommended that the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol request GEF and other donors to take into account the Action Plan in providing assistance to countries.

In its recommendation on guidance to the financial mechanism, ICCP recommended that all countries currently eligible for funding under the Convention should be eligible under the Protocol, as long as they either have become Parties to the

Protocol or have indicated a clear political commitment to doing so. In this connection, it is very encouraging that the Council has recognized the need for flexibility regarding eligibility for funding under the UNEP/GEF project on the development of national biosafety frameworks now that the Protocol is closed for signature.

ICCP also recommended that the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol should consider guidance to the financial mechanism in the field of capacity-building, including full participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House, and drawing upon the key elements requiring action that are listed in the Action Plan. The ICCP expressed the wish that the GEF Council should be provided with those key elements, so that the Council can take them into account at its first possible meeting. Accordingly, the recommendation and the Action Plan have been reproduced in annex B to the paper on relations with conventions, prepared by the GEF secretariat for this meeting.

ICCP also approved interim guidelines for the roster of experts on capacity building and invited the financial mechanism for the Protocol to assess whether it can have a role to play in the roster.

I should say here that the work of the second meeting of the ICCP on capacity-building was considerably facilitated by the work of the Open-ended Meeting of Experts on Capacity-building for the Implementation of the Protocol, which was held in Havana in July, with financial support from the GEF through UNEP. It was this meeting that produced the outline of the Action Plan and laid the groundwork for the adoption of the Plan by ICCP.

The Havana meeting of experts was held back-to-back with two related meetings, both organized in close cooperation with the GEF secretariat.

The first of those meetings—the International Workshop on Financial Support for National Biosafety Frameworks—provided an opportunity for various Governments and organizations to outline their capacity-building activities on biosafety. As noted in the documentation before you, the International Workshop recognized that activities implemented through the GEF Initial Strategy are an important nucleus around which other capacity-building activities can be designed. In this respect, it is important to try to ensure as broad a geographical coverage as possible for these activities so that the Protocol can achieve universal effectiveness in the shortest possible time.

The second meeting—the Workshop on Financing for Biological Diversity—was jointly convened by GEF, UNEP and the Convention Secretariat in accordance with decision V/11 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. Here again, a great

deal of emphasis was laid on the need for information-sharing among donors and the role of GEF in mobilizing additional resources. The outcome of the Workshop will be brought to the attention of the Conference of the Parties at its sixth meeting.

The meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing saw a major breakthrough towards the implementation of the third objective of the Convention—the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The Working Group approved for transmittal to the Conference of the Parties a set of draft guidelines on access and benefit-sharing, to be known as the “Bonn Guidelines”, which are intended to guide Parties in the development of national legislation on the subject and thus provide a clear framework for access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from their use. The Working Group also approved a plan of action for capacity-building for access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing, which will be essential for ensuring that countries are in a position to implement the third objective of the Convention.

The seventh meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice had as its main theme forest biological diversity, in particular, the consideration of ways to shift the focus of the current work programme from research to practical action. This is a difficult issue, but considerable progress was made, and the meeting did achieve agreement on a number of elements for inclusion by the Conference of the Parties in a revised programme of work. At your next meeting, I hope to be able to report on the final revised programme as adopted by the Conference of the Parties, since GEF will clearly have an important role to play in its implementation.

SBSTTA also adopted a number of recommendations on other issues, such as agricultural biodiversity, plant conservation, incentive measures and environmental impact assessment.

As has become the custom with recent meetings of SBSTTA, there were a large number of side-events that provided an opportunity for the exchange of scientific and technical information and experiences among participants. These are extremely useful events as they serve to strengthen scientific understanding of the main issues facing the Convention process and, as result, enhance the scientific basis of the advice provided to the Conference of the Parties.

The Open-ended Inter-Sessional Meeting on the Strategic Plan, National Reports and the Implementation of the Convention (MSP) was held immediately after SBSTTA. This was an important meeting, especially in the light of the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. There is a need to send a clear signal to the World Summit that the Convention has the necessary vitality and adaptability to address new challenges and to play a key role in achieving sustainable development. The main

purpose of the meeting was to look at ways to improve the functioning of the Convention and to give its operations a long-term focus through the development of a Strategic Plan. The meeting agreed upon the structure and certain elements of a Strategic Plan for the Convention for the period up to the year 2010, and upon further development of the Plan for adoption by the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. It also considered the experience gained through the national reporting procedure, as well as the overall implementation of the Convention, in particular, the support for priority actions identified in national biodiversity strategies and action plans. The meeting also suggested that the Conference of the Parties send a message to the World Summit on Sustainable Development on the need to renew the commitment to make available the financial resources and support for the capacity development required for the Convention to be effective.

Mr. Chairman,

The coming months will be crucial for the Convention. There is a general recognition that the role of biological diversity in sustainable development, health care and poverty alleviation is still poorly understood among decision makers and the general public. The preparatory process for the World Summit provides an opportunity to rectify those misconceptions and to spread a clear message that biodiversity is the foundation on which all human society is built and that its continuing loss severely diminishes the prospect of achieving sustainable development. I am sure that you, in the GEF Council, are equally committed to ensuring that that point is made loudly and clearly in the months ahead.

The forthcoming sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in The Hague in April 2002, will offer an opportunity for the international community to develop policy and guidance for further enhancing the global efforts to conserve and sustainably use biological diversity. As usual, the Conference of the Parties is expected to review the reports and information documents submitted by the GEF, and provide further guidance in light of the outcomes of discussions on other agenda items. The Conference of the Parties will also consider the second review of the effectiveness of the financial mechanism, which has just been completed by the independent evaluator.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to take this opportunity to register my personal appreciation to Mr. Mohamed El-Ashry and his staff for their contributions to the excellent collaboration that exists between the two secretariats.

The GEF secretariat participated actively in the inter-sessional meetings of the Convention and provided very useful inputs, not only in terms of institutional relations but also in terms of expertise, to the convention process. The practice of the GEF

presentations during the meetings of the Convention has been very much welcomed. It has provided a great opportunity for dialogues between the financial mechanism and Parties, both developed and developing, on the development and implementation of policy guidance and relevant operational policies and projects.

I thank you for your attention and the opportunity to address the Council. I wish you a successful meeting, and hope to see you all in The Hague.