



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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STATEMENT BY
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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
TO
THE FIRST MEETING OF THE *AD HOC* OPEN-ENDED INTER-SESSIONAL
WORKING GROUP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 8(j) AND
RELATED PROVISIONS
Seville, Spain, 27 – 31 March 2000

Madam Minister,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Representatives of the indigenous and local communities,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all to the first meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Inter-Sessional Working Group to address the implementation of Article 8(j) and related provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

This is indeed an auspicious occasion and it is most appropriate that this meeting is being held here in the beautiful and historic city of Seville. The hosting of the meeting by the Government of Spain provides evidence of its continuing commitment to achieve the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity with regard to the respect, preservation and maintenance of the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant to biological diversity.

As you know, this meeting follows the Madrid Workshop on Traditional Knowledge and Biological Diversity, which was also hosted by the Government of Spain, in November 1997. I therefore wish to express my deep gratitude to the Government of Spain for hosting this meeting.

I also wish to extend my thanks to the Governments of Finland, Canada, Central African Republic, Finland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom for their financial support, which has ensured a broad level of participation.

The establishment of this Working Group by the Conference of the Parties at its fourth meeting reflects the importance attached by the Parties to advancing the implementation of Article 8 (j) and related provisions of the Convention. To date, remarkable headway has been achieved in ensuring that the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities lie within the very heart of our efforts to implement the Convention. I am convinced that you will seize the

opportunity provided by this meeting to go one step further toward the implementation of Article 8(j) and related provisions.

You will have the opportunity, in the next few days, to give shape to the future programme of work of the Convention in this area and to provide advice for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its fifth meeting on related matters. This is a demanding and complex task; one that breaks new ground. Moreover, the implementation of Article 8 (j) has a bearing on other thematic and cross-cutting issues dealt with under the Convention.

As you will recall, the establishment of this Working Group evolved out of the deliberations at previous meetings of the Conference of the Parties. At its third meeting, held in Buenos Aires in 1996, the Conference of the Parties adopted decision III/14, which paved the way, through the convening of the Workshop on Traditional Knowledge and Biological Diversity in Madrid, for a more formal process for the inclusion of representatives of indigenous and local communities in the work of the Convention.

At the Madrid Workshop, a number of options were developed for a programme of work to further advance the implementation of Article 8(j) and related provisions. The options included in the report of the Madrid Workshop were considered by the Conference of the Parties at its fourth meeting and formed the basis in decision IV/9 for the mandate of this Working Group.

In preparing the draft work programme, submitted to your consideration, the Secretariat was mindful of the need to ensure consultation with, and involvement of, indigenous and local communities. The draft comprises some 18 different tasks under seven different programme elements. These are based on the structure of the elements that emerged from the Madrid Workshop. The work programme is to be carried out at both national and international levels.

While the purpose of the programme of work is to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity, it is worth noting that it would also contribute significantly to the fulfilment of many of the objectives of chapter 26 of Agenda 21 on recognizing and strengthening the role of indigenous people and their communities.

The active participation of representatives of indigenous and local communities has been critical to this whole process thus far. The process has seen the emergence of new approaches for the collaboration of indigenous and local community in decision-making regarding the implementation of Article 8(j) and the related provisions of the Convention. This is consistent with decisions of the Conference of the Parties and, I might add, with principle 22 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, which recognizes the vital role of indigenous and local communities in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices.

The Secretariat has prepared a number of background documents to assist you in your deliberations. These documents provide a framework to focus your discussions on the main agenda items, including:

- The application and development of legal and other forms of protection for traditional knowledge;
- Devising a future work programme to ensure the effective implementation of Article 8(j) at both national and international levels; and
- Measures to strengthen cooperation among indigenous and local communities for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity

In addition to the documentation, my colleagues and myself will naturally be available to assist you in every possible way to ensure the success of your deliberations.

If the spirit of collaboration most evident at the Madrid Workshop is maintained in this meeting, then I am confident that the Working Group will successfully achieve its mandate as laid down in decision IV/9 of the Conference of the Parties.

I look forward to a stimulating week and wish you all a most successful meeting.

Thank you for your attention.