

**Asian Regional Consultations in support of the finalization of the  
International Regime on Access & Benefit-sharing**

**4-6 December 2009  
Siem Reap, Cambodia**

**Welcome Note by the CBD Secretariat**

Excellency, Dr. Mok Mareath, Senior Minister of the Environment of Cambodia,  
Excellency, Mr. Sou Phirin, Governor of Siem Reap,  
Colleagues and friends,

On behalf of Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the Asian Regional Consultations in support of the finalization of the International Regime on Access & Benefit-sharing.

Through you, Minister, I would like to express our deep gratitude to the Government of Cambodia for hosting this important event here in Siem Reap, and for the very warm hospitality and welcome extended to all participants in this beautiful city.

We are certainly most privileged that the consultation is being held in this region of Cambodia, only a few kilometres away from the magnificent Temples of Angkor, which are of such significance they are listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

The CBD Secretariat is very pleased to be associated with this first of several regional consultations to support the finalization of the International Regime on Access and Benefit-sharing. I wish to express our sincere gratitude to the United Nations Environment Programme, for organizing this event and, of course, I also wish to thank the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

As you know, 110 Heads of State and Government at the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development called for action to negotiate an international regime, under the framework of the Convention, to promote and safeguard the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

In response to this call for action, the Conference of the Parties mandated the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing to negotiate an international regime on access and benefit-sharing, and instructed it to complete the IR's elaboration and negotiation at the earliest possible time before COP 10. The COP designated co-chairs to lead the negotiation process: Mr. Fernando Casas from Colombia and Mr. Timothy Hodges from Canada.

At its last meeting, in Bonn, in May 2008, the Conference of the Parties reiterated its instructions to complete the negotiations before COP 10 and adopted a detailed process to achieve this objective.

The last meeting of the Working Group was held only three weeks ago in Montreal, Canada. Participants characterized it as a very constructive meeting, carried out in a very positive atmosphere of cooperation and compromise. The Working Group made significant progress by producing - for the very first time - a single negotiating text incorporating all the elements of the International Regime. Progress was also made on the nature of the International Regime.

The next and final negotiating meeting will be held in March 2010 with the mandate to consolidate the text of the International Regime for its adoption at COP 10. The International Regime's adoption will be one of the key outcomes of COP 10 and the International Year of Biodiversity. With less than one year to go before its adoption, much work remains to finalise it.

This consultation provides an important opportunity to assess the progress made and to refine positions so the International Regime can be adopted in Nagoya, in October 2010. This workshop is also an excellent opportunity for countries from the region to assess progress made in understanding the complex issues surrounding ABS and their implications for the region.

This first regional consultative meeting offers therefore a unique opportunity to lead by example and as the other regional meetings will be inspired and guided by your proceedings. To this end, I have been requested by the Executive Secretary of the Convention to invite you to work towards designating the five representatives of the Asia Pacific region to the informal intersessional consultative group of the co-chairs to be held on 16-18 March 2010, just prior to the WGABS 9.

As always, the CBD Secretariat stands ready to assist the process. I wish you a very successful meeting.

Thank you for your attention.

-----