

Public Research & Regulation

Foundation with the objective to involve the public research sector in regulations and international agreements relevant to modern biotechnology

Second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (Montreal, Canada, 30 May - 3 June 2005).

Opening statement

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Foundation for Public Research and Regulation I extend our congratulations for your election as chair of this very important meeting and we wish to express our appreciation to the Secretariat for the excellent preparation of the documentation and for the support and guidance we received over the past months.

Mr. Chairman, governments and organisations throughout the world invest considerable funds in public research that is aimed at developing biotechnological applications that can contribute to, for example, sustainable production of food, feed and fibre, and to improving health and livelihoods of people.

The extent to which modern biotechnology will be able to contribute to these goals will depend on the national regulations and international agreements that apply to biotechnology and on the way in which they are implemented.

Mr. Chairman, a central aim of the negotiations on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety was to involve all stakeholders. Records of the negotiations show that several stakeholders were indeed very well represented. However, the public research sector, which includes over a hundred thousand researchers in developing and developed countries, was not represented in a significant or organised way during the negotiations.

As a result, the public research sector has not been able to provide scientific input for the benefit of the negotiations or to express its views about the effectiveness and workability of the provisions of the Cartagena Protocol. Another consequence of the absence of the public research sector during the negotiations is the persistence of the misperception that modern biotechnology is the exclusive domain of a handful of big multinationals.

Our Foundation for Public Research and Regulation aims to facilitate the involvement of the public research sector in international agreements such as the Cartagena Protocol. Detailed information about our initiative can be found in our information paper and on our web site.

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Mr. Chairman, more than 25 public sector scientists are attending this meeting with the support of our Foundation, and I take this opportunity to extend our sincere appreciation to the governments of Canada, Switzerland and the United States, as well as to the private sector organisation CropLife International for their financial contributions, without which the participation of these scientists would not have been possible.

The main purpose in participating in this meeting is to provide information about the ongoing work in public research institutes worldwide, and to assist delegates in understanding the implications for public research of the various options being debated. For this purpose, we will hold side events today and tomorrow in which we will present an overview of the ongoing work in public research institutes.

Another aim of our participation, Mr. Chairman, is to offer the vast and diverse expertise of the many scientists of our group to you and to all delegations participating in this meeting. The members of our group this week represent 14 scientific disciplines and will be able to answer questions in about 19 languages. More importantly, we can also directly access the expertise of over 100 Forum members in public institutions worldwide. We hope that delegates will not hesitate to approach us with any scientific questions they may have.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to end my introduction by assuring you and the delegations of our full support for the difficult task ahead this week.

I thank you very much for your attention.