



## PRRI MOP4 Opening Statement - 15 May 2008

Thank you Chairman, I speak on behalf of the Public Research and Regulation Initiative, also known as PRRI.

PRRI is an organisation of public sector scientists who are involved in research and development of modern biotechnology for the public good.

Mr Chairman, PRRI believes that the Biosafety Protocol is an important instrument, because it allows for international sharing of the benefits of modern biotechnology, to which Parties have agreed in article 19 of the Convention of Biodiversity. This same article 19 is the basis of the Protocol.

Having said this, and having listened to the discussions during this week, we feel it as our first obligation to remind this august gathering of the urgent need to increase public research and development in modern biotechnology.

Mr Chairman, the world community faces immense challenges caused by population growth, changes in consumption patterns, environmental degradation, and climate change. These developments confront us, as well as future generations, with extreme challenges for the sustainable production of food, feed, fiber and fuel. We need to empower local farmers to produce more crop per hectare, more crop per litre of water, with less input of fertilisers and-pesticides, and with less soil erosion. These challenges cannot be solved by current practices alone if we do not want to further encroach into the last natural habitats. Believing otherwise would be irresponsible to future generations.

While no single technology can solve these complex problems by itself, modern biotechnology can contribute significantly to finding solutions. The experiences with the genetically modified crop varieties that have been grown commercially since 1995 by millions of farmers, confirm this in terms of increased yield, reduced pesticide use, reduced fossil fuel use, and reduced soil erosion.

PRRI wishes for all Parties to understand that there is an urgent need for intensified public research and development in modern biotechnology to address local constraints, in particular in crops of importance to developing countries.



Lastly, Mr Chairman, we need to underline that modern biotechnology carries no inherent risks, and that any questions about potential unintended adverse effects can be addressed adequately through the risk assessment methodology of the Protocol.

In summary, Mr Chairman, we urge the negotiating Parties to constantly assess how the implementation of the Protocol might affect crucially important public research and development in modern biotechnology, to ensure that the Protocol fulfills its promise.

Thank you Mr Chairman