

PRRI MOP4 Statement on Assessment and Review - 14 May 2008

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

Mr. Chairman, PRRI believes that the Biosafety Protocol is a very important international instrument because it is intended to allow 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.

The Protocol has several key functions.

First, the Protocol gives countries that do not yet have biosafety regulations a basis to make informed decisions on import of LMOs. This function is of key importance to PRRI, because it facilitates technology transfer and international collaboration in research and development.

A second important function of the Protocol is that it can contribute to international harmonization of national regulations on areas such as definitions and risk assessment.

PRRI believes that in the process of assessment and review, it should in any case be assessed to what extent the Protocol has fulfilled these functions.

When PRRI checked the BCH this morning for all the AIA decisions, we found that there were no decisions on imports of LMOs published on the BCH by countries that do not have biosafety regulations.

This suggests that in the 5 years of the CPB being in force, the key function of the protocol has not been used.

With this in mind, PRRI suggests that process of assessment and review takes into account the following points:

1. Why are there so few, if any, decisions on import of LMOs by countries that do not have biosafety regulations in place?
2. To what extent are key elements of national regulations, such as definitions and risk assessment, harmonized with the definitions and risk assessment of the CPB?
3. What has been the impact of the CPB on technology transfer and international collaboration in public research and development?

In addition, Mr. Chair, PRRI also recommends to explore possible mechanisms for flexibility in the procedures, such as special provisions for confined field trials for research and development, which require less information and shorter procedures than placing on the market of LMOs.



Lastly, Mr. Chairman, bearing in mind the wealth of experience with LMOs that has been gained over the years, PRRI believes that the time has come to identify, in accordance with article 7 paragraph 4, which LMOs or groups of LMOs are unlikely to have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking also into account risks to human health, and can therefore be exempted from the AIA procedures. PRRI stands ready to provide further substantiation on this point.

Thank you Mr. Chairman