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## **PRRI Statement on GM Trees – 20 May**

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

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

Mme Chair, considering the 20% increase per decade in global demand for wood, there is an urgent need to find ways to produce more wood per hectare in established plantations in order to minimize further destruction of natural forests for future generations. There is also an urgent need to reduce the environmental pollution as a result of wood processing.

Classical breeding has made major contributions to improving the productivity of plantation forests. However, the current challenges cannot be met by conventional breeding alone.

Mme Chair, to meet our trans-generation responsibility, we have to find solutions today. We strongly believe that modern biotechnology, including genetic modification, can contribute significantly to finding solutions in these areas. It is also clear that much of the required innovation is coming from public research institutes. On the PRRI web site, and in a side event held this week, we have cited many examples of the considerable progress made in tree biotechnology by public researchers from all over the world.

In addition, Mme Chair, we believe that questions about safety of GM trees can be addressed adequately through the case-by-case risk assessment of the Biosafety Protocol.

Given the huge potential benefits of GM trees and the extensive safety record of the hundreds of field trials with GM trees conducted worldwide, there is no scientific justification for a blanket suspension of releases of GM Trees. Field research is, in fact, the only way to get realistic answers to the many questions that were so well developed in the background document on GM trees. Field trials also serve as an important educational resource for all stakeholders. A suspension of field trials would be detrimental to important public research.

Thank you, Mme Chair