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PRRI MOP4 Statement on Public Awareness - 13 May 2008

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

I speak on behalf of Public Research and Regulation Initiative, PRRI.

PRRI is of the view that public awareness, education and participation is an important issue that should be achieved by the Parties to the Protocol. There should be no tolerance for misinformation. We see that the current flood of non-science based information and its use by the media undermines the goals of the Protocol.

It is our concern that much efforts intend to provide information highlighting potential or unsubstantiated hazards and perceived adverse effects of LMOs in general, are highlighted in reports, leading to fear, misconception and needless concern among the public. There is clear evidence of the lack of use of information of the positive economical, social and environmental benefits. The public is completely unaware of the positive social and economic consequences of adopting modern biotechnology.

Those who oppose the use of LMOs turn to popular channels such as the media and even governments to spread only alleged negative aspects. These groups have established their credibility as sources of information. This tactic of selective use of only negative claims has ignored the scientific evidence. This practice has been documented.

In order to add value to public participation in decision making and enhance public understanding in this subject, efforts should be taken to engage scientists with recognized credentials to assist in outreach and educational programs. PRRI is composed of volunteers who are multilingual scientists from various fields and could offer independent professional expertise in proper science communication on both risks and benefits.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.