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SIXTH MEETING OF THE AD HOC OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING CONVENES IN GENEVA

Geneva – 22 January 2008. The sixth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS 6) of the Convention on Biological Diversity opened yesterday at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The meeting was convened under the co-chairmanship of Fernando Casas (Colombia) and Timothy Hodges (Canada), and is expected to continue the discussions of its fifth meeting, which took place in Montreal in October 2007 on the elaboration and negotiation of an international regime on access to genetic resources and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their use. The meeting is being attended by over 520 participants, representing Parties to the Convention and observer States, indigenous and local communities, inter-governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, United Nations sister agencies, and the business community.

Following the call for action at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, to negotiate an international regime for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources, the Conference of the parties at its seventh meeting, held in Kuala Lumpur in February 2004, mandated the Ad Hoc Working Group to elaborate and negotiate such a regime with the aim of adopting an instrument or instruments to effectively implement the provisions of Article 15 and Article 8(j) of the Convention and the three objectives of the Convention.

At its eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in Curitiba, in 2006, the Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing was requested to continue the elaboration and negotiation of the international regime and instructed to complete its work at the earliest possible time before the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in 2010. The Government of Japan has offered to host this important meeting which will also coincide with the celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity in the city of Nagoya.

In opening the meeting, Timothy Hodges informed delegates that as this would be the last substantive meeting of the Working Group before the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 9), the Working Group has less than five days to achieve meaningful results. He urged



Parties to cooperate in order to advance mutual understanding in order to achieve tangible progress to report to COP 9.

A statement was read on behalf of Her Excellency Marina Silva, Minister of Environment of Brazil, by Fernando Coimbra, the representative of Brazil at the meeting. In her statement, Ms. Silva urged Parties not to be deterred by the results of earlier deliberations “from fulfilling the COP 8 decision, from reaching Bonn with significant progress in negotiations that may enable us to adopt the international regime by 2010.” She further added that, “There is no more time for rhetoric, for actions dissociated from multilateral efforts. We are ourselves increasingly feeling the impacts of our lack of action. We are no longer only aiming for the welfare of future generations. To act now is not a matter of political will, it is a question of responsibility, of commitment, of vision, of ethics and of survival.”

Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention stated “This meeting is a pivotal point in the negotiations of the international regime on access and benefit sharing,” and invited “Parties, Governments and all stakeholders to rise to the challenge ahead under the able leadership of our two Co-Chairs.” He assured Parties that the Secretariat would spare no effort in assisting them in this historic endeavour.

For further information please visit: <http://www.cbd.int/meetings/wgabs-06/default.shtml>