

Long-Term Financing for the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

**SECRETARIAT AND MONTRÉAL INTERNATIONAL APPLAUD
ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE LUCIENNE ROBILLARD**

Montréal, May 21, 2004 – Montréal International Chairman Jean-Jacques Bourgeault and President & Chief Executive Officer Marc G. Fortier are pleased to join Hamdallah Zedan, Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, in applauding today's announcement by the Honourable Lucienne Robillard, Minister responsible for Economic Development Canada, that the federal government has decided to contribute to the long-term financing of Secretariat operations.

The announcement comes on the occasion of tomorrow's International Day for Biological Diversity, and the 10th anniversary of the coming into force of the Convention.

This United Nations Convention was adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Canada played a key role in it, and was the first industrialized country to ratify it. Under the multilateral accord, the signatory States agree to take the necessary steps to preserve the planet's biological diversity, to use biological resources in a sustainable way, and to share genetic resources equitably. The Convention was ratified by the necessary number of governments by the end of 1993. It now has 188 signatories. The Parties to the Convention assembled for a conference in Djakarta, Indonesia in November 1995, and approved a motion to headquarter the Convention Secretariat in Montréal. This was done in early 1996. The Secretariat has more than 70 full-time employees.

Speaking on behalf of all the partners who worked on bringing the Secretariat here, and particularly the federal and Québec governments, as well as Ville de Montréal, Bourgeault said, "Montréal International is proud that the Convention's member countries chose the Montréal area for the Secretariat's headquarters. For us, this not only means recognition of Metropolitan Montréal's international character, but also of the synergy that exists in the region for better pursuing the universal objective of preserving and fostering biological diversity."

Fortier underscored the contribution made by international organizations to Metro Montréal's global stature, as well as the economic benefit of their presence in the region. "The choice of Montréal was not random," he said. "It arose from a set of factors that make locating in the metropolitan region a sound business decision, particularly because of its bilingual and multicultural fabric, its higher education and research resources, its tremendous capacity for openness to the challenges facing our planet, and its enviable quality of life."

“More than 60 international organizations contribute to the vitality of Montréal, to its economic and cultural life, and to its international reputation,” added Fortier. “The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the other world bodies based in Metro Montréal are directly responsible for more than a quarter of a billion dollars of spending in the region each year.”

Montréal International was created in 1996 as a result of a private/public partnership. Its mission is to contribute to the economic development of Metro Montréal, and to enhance its international status. Montréal International is financed by the private sector, the Montréal Metropolitan Community, and the Governments of Canada and Québec. Montréal International's mandates include the promotion of Metro Montréal, attracting foreign investment and international organizations, the integration of foreign workers, and developing industrial clusters such as life sciences and information technology.

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