



STATEMENT BY
DR. CRISTIANA PAȘCA PALMER
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
on the occasion of the
SIXTH SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO
THE AARHUS CONVENTION
ITEM 6
BUDVA, MONTENEGRO, 11-13 SEPTEMBER 2017

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my great pleasure to address the Sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention.

The Aarhus Convention and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety have a number of core issues in common, which require strong collaboration. These include, in particular, access to information and participation in decision-making regarding living modified organisms (or “LMOs”) and genetically modified organisms (also known as “GMOs”). The collaboration between the Aarhus Convention and the Cartagena Protocol goes back many years, and includes a variety of activities. These include the organization of online fora, workshops and round tables, as well as the development of e-learning modules and a checklist of key measures required for ratifying and implementing the two instruments.

These activities have all contributed to the capacities of Parties to effectively implement both instruments, and it is for this reason that our respective governing bodies, which share 46 Parties in common, have repeatedly called for continued collaboration on key issues.

The latest fruit of our collaboration is a side event that took place yesterday on building capacity for public participation to effectively implement the Cartagena Protocol and the “GMO Amendment” of the Aarhus Convention. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention for co-organizing and financing a Party to the Cartagena Protocol to this event.

This activity follows the successful organization of a Round Table on Public Awareness, Education and Participation concerning LMOs held in November 2016. One of the recommendations that emerged from the Round Table was the need to further implement and extend the Programme of Work on public awareness, education and participation regarding the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs under the Cartagena Protocol, as well as adopt priority areas to implement Article 23 of the Cartagena Protocol and enhance cooperation with the Aarhus Convention.

There is no doubt that the report of the Round Table contributed to a decision taken at the Eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety last December in Cancun, Mexico to extend the Programme of Work to 2020.

The Programme of Work was adopted in 2010 to facilitate the implementation of Article 23 of the Cartagena Protocol that requires Parties to the Protocol to promote and facilitate public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs. It has provided



guidance for Parties to both instruments in developing relevant mechanisms, in particular for public participation and access to information. At the present time, many Parties are struggling to put in place such mechanisms; thus additional joint efforts are still needed to support our Parties.

I would very much like to encourage all Parties to further support our collaborative activities and make use of the valuable materials that have been developed, in particular the e-learning modules available in the Biodiversity E-Learning Platform. I would also like to welcome further activities, for example, the development of a pocket guide describing benefits, systemic challenges, priority areas and good practices in relation to promoting transparency and public participation in matters related to LMOs and GMOs, to be developed jointly by the Aarhus Convention and the Cartagena Protocol. The pocket guide will be made available on the Portal on Public Awareness, Education and Participation on the Cartagena Protocol website.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit, the world community agreed to Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. Principle 10, among other things, seeks to ensure that everyone has access to information and can participate in the decision-making process. In that spirit, let us continue to collaborate with the shared mindset of linking our work with broader national agendas, including sustainable development, to further support implementation of the Aarhus Convention and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.
