



Roundtable on the Biosafety Protocol

Friday, 31 March 2000, 10h30 - 12h30

International Environment House, Room 2

When the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety was adopted in the early morning hours of 29 January, it was widely hailed as a groundbreaking agreement. The Protocol promises to protect the global environment from any potential risks posed by the transboundary transport of living modified organisms (LMOs). Advance Informed Agreement (AIA) procedures will ensure that recipient countries have both the opportunity and the capacity to assess these risks. The Protocol's role in setting the rules of the game for trade in bio-engineered crops could have major implications for the biotechnology industry – which is likely to become one of the most powerful forces of the 21st century.

But many questions remain. While environmental agreements are premised on the precautionary principle, decisions under trade law require "sufficient scientific evidence": How will the Protocol square this circle? Could Governments applying its terms be challenged in the WTO? How will the Protocol's AIA procedures operate in practice? How will the precautionary principle work in practice? Will the Protocol have an important effect on trade flows and agriculture? The Roundtable on the Biosafety Protocol will start exploring the answers.

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| 10:00 | Coffee |
| 10:30 | Welcoming remarks
Introduction by moderator, Pekka Haavisto, UNEP |
| 10:45 | Panel of experts: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mohan Kumar, Permanent Mission of India to the UN- João Magalhães, World Trade Organization- François Pythoud, Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape- Andreas Seiter, Novartis- Matthew Stilwell, Center for International Environmental Law |
| 11:40 | Discussion with panelists and participants |
| 12:25 | Wrap-up by moderator |