

**THE CONCLUDING SESSION
OF
THE LIKE MINDED MEGADIVERSE COUNTRIES
(LMMCs)**



REMARKS

BY

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IN

NEW DELHI

ON

21ST JANUARY, 2005

**Excellencies,
Ambassadors,
Distinguished delegates from the group of Like Minded Megadiverse
Countries,
✓ Mr. Charles McNeill from UNDP,
Dr. P. Balakrishna from IUCN,
Mr. N. Rotich, from UNEP,
My colleagues in the Ministry of Environment and Forests, and friends,**

I am pleased to congratulate you all for the successful deliberations, which you have had during the series of meetings of Like Minded Megadiverse Countries (LMMCs) here in Delhi. The adoption of the New Delhi Declaration marks the ushering in of the implementation phase of the Multilateral Regime on Access and Benefit Sharing, a decision that we so assiduously arrived at during the Kuala Lumpur Conference of Parties (COP) meeting.

Thirteen years after its adoption, while the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has made some notable progress, but it has not succeeded in showing the loss of biological diversity worldwide, and of ensuring fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of biological resources. Thirteen years is a short period on which to base evaluation of impacts of any international agreement on the behavior of the countries and people or to determine whether it has improved the health of ecosystems and the quality of life, but it is long enough to assess the contribution that its implementation has made towards creating the conditions that could redirect our responses and efforts towards meeting the goals of the Convention.

The issue of access and benefit sharing involving genetic resources and traditional knowledge has become a subject of wide ranging discussions and debates at various international fora. The Bonn Guidelines were recognized as the

first step of a process towards implementation of provisions of the Convention relating to access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing.

Now that we have moved a step forward from Bonn guidelines with the seventh Conference of Parties (COP-7) to the CBD, taking a landmark decision regarding development of a multilateral regime on Access and Benefit Sharing, including those on issues such as traditional knowledge and technology transfer, I hope that the discussions held over this week help us further in conserving our biodiversity, in enhancing our knowledge on how to use natural resources sustainably over the long term, and in promoting environmentally sustainable economic growth.

✓ I would like to extend my appreciation to IUCN and UNDP for their support in providing this platform to work together for evolving a common position of the Group of Like Minded Megadiverse Countries on various issues associated with access and benefit sharing, Intellectual Property Rights, and Traditional Knowledge. Our deliberations have given us the confidence that we are moving towards convergence of positions of the group of LMMCs. The IUCN meeting provided a good opportunity for the Like Minded Group to brainstorm various issues which came up for decision making during the Expert and Ministerial meetings.

✓ I am glad that the discussion among the LMMC countries in the UNDP coordinated meeting on developing a Megadiverse countries and Knowledge and Policy Network has helped in emergence of a comprehensible project concept. Developing such a unique project will not only help in sharing experiences and knowledge and adoption of best practices, but also in developing conservation

strategies towards access and benefit sharing of genetic resources and traditional knowledge, which is a step towards our commitment on sustainable development. As President of LMMC group, I assure you that the LMMC Secretariat, with the support of UNDP, will work towards early finalization of this important project of developing Knowledge and Policy Network of Megadiverse Countries.

Finally I believe that the two-day Expert level and Ministerial level meeting of the groups has been historic. In the Expert meeting held yesterday we discussed a range of issues linking traditional knowledge with the use and conservation of biological resources, including the role of traditional knowledge and practices in the management and conservation of biological resources. In my view this has been an extraordinary meeting. Extraordinary in the sense of the complexity of the issues we have been discussing and also in the sense of wide consensus that we have arrived at on some of the contentious aspects of a multilateral regime. I believe that we have achieved a great deal which will help us in portraying our joint front in a more cohesive and effective way in the coming negotiations at Bangkok and beyond. The deliberations in the last five days have helped us in clarifying and crystallizing our thoughts on Access and Benefit Sharing that could make a real difference in ensuring our commitments of implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), especially the provisions relating to Access and Benefit Sharing.

With the adoption of the New Delhi Declaration by the Ministers and their representatives, the political will of this Group of Like-Minded Megadiverse Countries to move forward has been reaffirmed. We, in our capacity as the President of this Group, would like to once again assure you all possible help in

coordinating the activities of the member countries to further the objectives of the group.

Before I conclude, I would like to extend my appreciation to all of you, the LMMC Ministers and delegates, IUCN, UNDP, and to my colleagues in the Ministry who tirelessly worked to make this meeting successful. We have a small team in the Ministry to take up this gigantic task and I commend them for their efforts.

Finally, wishing a comfortable and safe journey to our foreign participants, I declare the close of this LMMCs meeting in Delhi, and wish you all great success during the Adhoc Working Group meeting negotiations at Bangkok.

VANAKKAM
