Convention on Biological Diversity

Statement on behalf of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Astrid Schomaker, at the joint CBD/Aarhus Convention Side Event for the Eight Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention

Geneva
18 November 2025

Distinguished delegates and guests,
Colleagues and friends,

On behalf of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Ms. Astrid Schomaker, it is an honour to welcome you all to this joint side event, entitled "Promoting transparency and participatory approaches to biosafety-related decision-making."

This theme lies at the confluence of workstreams under the Aarhus Convention, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

With the growing complexity of global trade and the increasing transboundary movement of LMOs, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Aarhus Convention's GMO Amendment constitute essential instruments to ensure the safe handling of LMOs/GMOs.

Parties have gained valuable experience in implementing Article 23 of the Cartagena Protocol on public awareness, education and participation, including access to information.
This experience also covers aspects that advance the principles enshrined in the Aarhus Convention's GMO Amendment.
It is important to build on that body of experience. The priorities for action are clear from the fourth Joint Arhus Convention - CBD round table:

- We need to strengthen the capacity of public authorities to effectively ensure access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice on LMO/GMO-related matters; and

- Parties need to bolster the capacity of courts and other independent review bodies to address relevant cases.

In addition, from the fourth round table, we know that we also require:

- Early access to correct, complete and objective information, tailored to the needs of different target groups, to be provided in a proactive fashion;

- And the guarantee of meaningful and inclusive public participation in decision-making regarding LMOs/GMOs, with particular attention to children, youth, elderly persons, women, indigenous peoples and local communities, persons with disabilities,

environmental defenders/environmental human rights defenders and other groups in vulnerable situations.

At the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP 10), Parties adopted the Implementation Plan for the Cartagena Protocol to 2030.

The Plan includes a goal on public awareness, education and participation, including access to information regarding LMOs. It also provides a framework to guide implementation and to enable the monitoring of progress.

The Implementation Plan for the Cartagena Protocol complements the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), notably Target 17 on the safe use of biotechnology and Target 22 on access to justice.

Distinguished delegates,

This year, with the entry into force of the Aarhus Convention's GMO Amendment, national action is key to ensuring transparency and participation in biosafety-related decision-making processes under both instruments.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the 33 countries that are also Parties to the Cartagena Protocol for making the entry into force of the GMO Amendment possible.

We at the Secretariat of the CBD look forward to working with the Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention to support synergistic implementation.

We can build on our long-standing cooperation marked by many joint achievements, including our thematic roundtables, the Pocket Guide and, of course, this very side-event.

I wish you a productive session.

Thank you.