

**ABS informal EU Expert Meeting**  
**Advancing together on Nagoya Protocol implementation**  
**and preparing the COP/MOP1 (13-17 Pyeongchan) Rome, 4-5 September 2014**

Opening statement of the Renato Grimaldi

Director General of the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea

Directorate-general for nature and sea protection

Distinguished Colleagues,

Distinguished Participants,

I wish to welcome you in Rome also on behalf of the Minister Gian Luca Galletti, and I take the opportunity to thank all the representatives of the Member States, the European Commission and all the stakeholders at the European level here present for your numerous and so enriching participation.

I also wish to thank the colleagues of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their hospitality and collaboration in organizing this meeting of experts, as well as all the colleagues of the Ministry of Environment who have been involved in the organization.

Under the aegis of the Italian Semester of Presidency of the EU Council, the Ministry of Environment organized this meeting of experts to give continuity to the experience concerning genetic resources (so called ABS regime, *Access and Benefit Sharing*) which is emerging in Europe, both in terms of preparation of the global engagements undertaken under the CBD, and in terms of legally binding decisions adopted on the internal level of the Union.

As you all know, among the main appointments foreseen under the framework of the Semester, there is the 12<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP) of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which will take place in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea, from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2014. In this occasion, the first Meeting of Parties (MOP) of the States Parties to the Protocol of Nagoya on Access to Benefit Sharing will be held.

By the last 14<sup>th</sup> of July, 50 States Parties to the CBD ratified the Protocol of Nagoya, therefore the necessary condition for the entry into force of the Protocol was met (foreseen on the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2014). This also determined the beginning of the initial, important preparatory phase of the implementation of the ABS regime at the International level.

Last April, the European Union officially adopted the Protocol of Nagoya in its quality of “*regional organization of economic integration*”. Still in April, the Union definitively adopted the EU Regulation N. 511/2014 “*on compliance measures for users from the Nagoya Protocol*”.

The attention of the European Institutions towards the Protocol of Nagoya is further witnessed by the new “*EU Strategy for Biodiversity to 2020*”, which established as objective in May 2011 that one to develop common rules to give implementation and ratify the Protocol “*not beyond 2015*”, as well as to promote mechanisms of cooperation and *ad hoc* incentives.

Genetic diversity is a “*source of innovation*” and of significant interest to put in place policies and actions dealing with the restoration of ecosystems, to support green infrastructure in our continent, to improve pure and applied research, as well as for other different sectors of the European economies.

The transfer towards a green economy must take into account this acknowledgement and the greater attention given by the States to the natural capital, which is a funding element of our societies and as such needs to be recognized and valued.

The subject of the access to genetic resources, and their utilization, gathers together numerous actors of the common European house: scientific institutions, universities, protected areas, associations and organizations of stakeholders, industrial sector’s subjects and local Public Authorities, these last are called , *in loco*, to safeguard and promote their own heritage.

Genetic resources represent an irreplaceable part of natural capital from which, to a great extent, the wealth and well-being of European citizens as well as European development depend upon. Genetic diversity is of fundamental importance for human being’s food, as well as for obtaining and producing essential vegetable and animal products.

As mentioned during the last Expert meeting on Resource Mobilization, held in Rome in July 7-8 2014, biodiversity and genetic resources are determinant for producing typical and high-quality products; this theme will receive again great attention next year in the occasion of the EXPO 2015, which will be held in Milan, as well as within the European debate focusing on the sustainable use of food and social, economic, environmental, and sanitary aspects to it related.

Genetic resources can also generate direct and indirect benefits for climate change mitigation and adaptation, contribute to the conservation of soil and the preservation of source of water. Concerning the European biodiversity and its peculiar qualities, genetic resources play a central role for our economies, by not only influencing them, but also by being able to contribute to defining new horizons for our economic systems.

The exchange and utilizations’ practices of genetic material used in the European Union – and also promoted by the European Commission in order to support the EU Regulation 511/2014 – brought to the fore the numerous and diverse sectors of the European economies, which have interests involved in this field (such as the cosmetic and pharmaceutical sector, the agro-industry, animal husbandry, industrial biotechnology, plants’ breeding, seeds’ production, gardens, and many others). It also highlighted the interest of the research & development sector.

Europe has therefore the greatest interest in this sector.

Taking into account also the experiences concerning the conservation *ex situ* of biodiversity (botanical gardens, germplasm banks, and others) carried on at the European level, we strongly wish - and we engage to support – that the Union will further develop during the next years networking initiatives on the exchange of knowledge, good and best practices for the protection and use of genetic resources, as well as initiatives to diffuse knowledge and incentivize scientific and technological research, and to get all the stakeholders involved.

Indeed, the protection and promotion of the biodiversity heritage, as well as the development of models of sustainability, demand a great and constant involvement of local stakeholders and actors.

In the occasion of the preparation of the negotiations that will be opened in the Republic of Korea, the EU Council of the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 2014, after having confirmed the interest to *“further contribute to the international work which is estimated to be essential for the implementation of the Protocol of Nagoya”*, stressed the relevant role played by local communities for the effective and efficient implementation of the Protocol.

The normative acts and policies adopted, the common needs and issues concerning genetic resources, show a common vision and the common engagement undertaken by Europe to play a global role in the field of genetic resources.

Thus, this Expert Meeting aims at starting, on the one side, a dialogue on technical aspects concerning the processes and practices to implement the Nagoya Protocol that have been initiated within the Member States, also in the light of the contributions brought by the European stakeholders engaged in these processes. On the other hand, it aims at contributing to define a common position on the items that will be discussed in Pyeongchang, for the first Meeting of Parties of the Protocol.

I wish you a successful two-days of work.

4<sup>th</sup> September 2014