

**WIPO-UPOV SYMPOSIUM
ON INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS
IN PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY**

OPENING REMARKS

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October 24, 2003

Ladies and gentlemen,
Friends and colleagues,

It is a pleasure and honor for me to be here with you. I must confess a certain nervousness because I know next to nothing about intellectual property rights and plant biotechnology, but I am not to be held fully responsible for my being here. I have been invited and I have accepted it as a challenge and I am going to learn a lot from you in the course of this Symposium.

- WIPO and UPOV have convened this second Symposium on plant biotechnology to examine the role of intellectual property more closely in this specific area at the international, regional and national levels.
- This Symposium will specifically focus on how intellectual property rights, i.e., patents and breeders' rights, are effectively used and managed in the field of plant biotechnology.
- This requires an understanding of how complex legal frameworks interact from both an institutional and an operational point of view. Therefore, this Symposium has brought together speakers and participants from governments, international organizations, academics and legal experts, as well as companies active in biotechnology and plant breeding.
- Speakers will address issues such as the importance of patents and plant breeders' rights in dissemination of technology and development of particular research and business licensing strategies; accessibility of protected inventions and plant varieties for further innovation and breeding will also be covered.
- As it was pointed out at the last year's WIPO-UPOV Symposium, biotechnology is a fast-growing area of the world economy, for all countries - developed and developing. This area is not free of its controversies or conflicting views. Some have labeled it a "burning issue." And because of the great interest shown by the participants and the importance they have

strongly voiced on this topic, the two Organizations have responded by organizing this second Symposium.

- Today's presentations, we hope, will assist us to better understand the role of intellectual property in this field. In particular, the issues raised in last year's Symposium will again be addressed, but in addition, the development of national or regional policy and legislation will be reviewed, as well as the business strategies, to see if we are meeting the current demands of society and that of the users of the intellectual property systems.
- Therefore, today's Symposium is divided into four sessions with their focus on:
 - (1) Plant Biotechnology Developments in the International Framework;
 - (2) Plant Biotechnology and its Dissemination, as an overview;
 - (3) Intellectual Property in Plant Biotechnology: National/Regional Experiences;
 - (4) Management of Intellectual Property Rights.

And at the end, there will be a panel discussion under the heading, "Enhancing the Benefits of Intellectual Property," where more of you from the floor will have a chance to raise questions or make comments.

- All of the papers will be posted on WIPO and UPOV Websites immediately after the Symposium.
- I should like to express from the outset, our gratitude to our distinguished speakers who have kindly accepted the invitation of WIPO and UPOV. Their knowledge and experience on the topics of the Symposium will no doubt enlighten our discussions.

With this, I declare the "WIPO-UPOV Symposium on Intellectual Property Rights in Plant Biotechnology" open, and move directly on to the first Session.

- I must also tell our colleagues, the speakers, that I will be observing a strict time-limit as we all want to have a chance to hear all the speakers and to give also our colleagues from the floor a chance to make comments or ask questions.
- I will also refrain from introducing the speakers, since everybody has their profile in the materials handed to you for this Symposium.