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सचिव एवं महानिदेशक

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I am happy to know that the Indian Society of Plant Genetic Resources, Bioversity International, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority, and National Biodiversity Authority are jointly organizing the 1st International Agrobiodiversity Congress: Science, Technology, Policy and Partnership during November 6-9, 2016 at New Delhi.

The natural resources, both physical and biological, provide food, fodder, fuel, fiber, medicine and industrial products. Over a period of time, these natural resources have been over-exploited that has resulted in the reduction of biological diversity. Developmental activities have also contributed significantly for the loss of biodiversity. This has warranted conservation of valuable bio-resource through gene/seed bank, field level germplasm collection and cryo-preservation enabling *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation and management.

Globally, concerns are being expressed over alarming rate of loss of biodiversity. However, the existing biological richness in this planet still provides the opportunities for exploring newer species. Envisioning this, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research started exploring plant genetic resources way back in 1976. Eventually, the National Gene Bank at National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR), New Delhi, has a collection of 4.29 lakh accessions of crops, of which, nearly 1.9 lakh accessions have been characterized and more than 2000 cultivars have been DNA fingerprinted. A significant milestone in agrobiodiversity conservation is characterization of 22,000 accessions of wheat and 18,500 accessions of chickpea during the last five years. So far, India has imported over 3 million samples of seed/planting materials, as germ plasm collection from 147 countries, and has distributed about 0.4 million samples of germplasm to various research organizations following the germplasm exchange protocol. Further, the germplasm collections are being screened and evaluated for bringing climate resilience in agriculture. While sustainable agricultural development is attributed to biodiversity conservation, the agro-ecosystems are also to be emphasized for their species richness that is linked to the food chain. Realizing this, the ICAR has also established National Bureaux for genetic resources of animals, fish, agriculturally important insects and microorganisms widening the horizon of agrobiodiversity conservation.

The International Agrobiodiversity Congress would enable sharing of global experiences in agrobiodiversity management. I am sure, the Congress would also dwell upon issues regarding germplasm exchange, plant quarantine, GMOs, equitable access to biodiversity, benefit sharing etc. and evolve strategic recommendations along with a framework for conservation and utilization of agrobiodiversity for ensuring sustainable agricultural development.

I wish the Congress a grand success.

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T. Mohapatra

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