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Note to Editors

MONITORING OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS
RELEASED INTO THE ENVIRONMENT

An OECD Workshop, hosted by the Danish National Agency for Environmental Protection, was held in Copenhagen, 3-7 December 1990, and attended by more than 70 scientists and regulators from 16 OECD member countries, the Commission of the European Communities and the United Nations Environment Programme.

At this, the first international workshop of its kind, OECD took significant steps towards building an international consensus on scientific principles and methods for monitoring of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) released into the environment.

Opening the workshop, Mr. Ole Plougman, Deputy Director General of the Danish Environmental Protection Agency, drew attention to the timeliness of such a meeting in view of the increasing number of experimental introductions of GMOs to the environment worldwide. In most OECD countries, frameworks for assuring safety in biotechnology have been established. He said there was now a need for further elaboration of scientific principles and methods for monitoring the fate and environmental interactions of organisms released to the environment.

Previous initiatives on biotechnology safety have led to the development of the widely-used OECD guidelines and principles for assessing potential risks associated with the use of genetically modified organisms in industry, agriculture, and the environment. Commenting on the forward-looking and innovative character of the work achieved, the workshop's overall chairman, Dr. Roger Nourish of the UK, said: "The workshop took an important first step in international exchange and co-operation in this rapidly evolving area. I believe it made significant findings and suggestions about general approaches to monitoring; specific design and methods for monitoring of plants and microorganisms, and for future national and OECD work in this area."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Victor Morgenroth
OECD Environment Directorate
2, rue André-Pascal, 75775 Paris Cedex 16, France

Telephone: (33-1) 45 24 97 75

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