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INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MEDICINAL AND AROMATIC PLANTS (ICMAP)

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MOTS-CLES:

PLANTE AROMATIQUE, PLANTE MEDICINALE, DURABILITE, POLITIQUE, COOPERATION

Throughout the world, in both developing and developed countries, there is an ever increasing interest in medicinal and aromatic plants – in their use, development, cultivation, harvesting, pharmacognosy, phytochemistry, biology, systematics, ethnopharmacology, conservation and sustainable use and so on – and this is manifested in part by the large number of groups that have been established, ranging from local societies to international bodies such as ESCOP, FIPS and IUPHAR dealing with various aspects of this complex field, as well as by UN agencies such as UNIDO and FAO and other international bodies such as IUCN, WWF and IPGRI. each with their own particular interests. In addition the Rio Summit (UNCED), Agenda 21 and the Convention on Biological Diversity have enhanced awareness at the highest political levels of the importance and significance of medicinals and aromatics in human society and economic development. At the same time attention has been drawn to the ever-increasing threats these plants and the ecosystems in which they grow face as a result of habitat loss, genetic erosion and pollution caused by human activities.

It is obvious that in such circumstances there is a great risk of dispersal of forces, duplication of effort and lack of communication. This would clearly weaken the impact that we are able to make individually as organizations. It was in this context that ICMAP was set up, following the decision made at the first World Congress on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants in July 1991 in Maastricht that there was a need to establish an international body to coordinate research on medicinal and aromatic plants. The initiative was taken by the International Union of Biological Sciences to hold a preparatory meeting attended by representatives of relevant organizations in June 1993. The decision was then taken to create ICMAP with the aim of coordinating the very broad array of activities that are taking place world-wide regarding medicinal and aromatic plants, and providing a means of cooperation, communication and collaboration.

ICMAP aims to serve as a focal point to try and meet some of these challenges and provide leadership through the support and coordination of international activities relating to research, utilization, development, conservation and sustainable use of medicinal and aromatic plants. The objectives of ICMAP are the following: (1) to promote every five years World Congresses on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (WOCMAP), (2) to establish task forces for specific subjects which need attention and improved cooperation (including genetic resources) (3) to publish a newsletter,

and (4) to promote knowledge of the use of traditional medicine systems. It is also planning to set up an information system and clearing house for medicinal and aromatic plants.

ICMAP does not intend in any way to usurp the activities of its member organizations: on the contrary it is there to serve the members and in time will be seen as the recognized international authority representing and acting on behalf of the whole area of medicinal and aromatic plants. It can only do this, however, with the full participation and active cooperation of its constituent members.

Already ICMAP has begun its activities through the publication of a Newsletter, the establishment of a number of Task Forces and the preparation, along with ISHS and the Argentinian group SAIPA, of the second World Congress on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants for Human Welfare which will take place in Mendoza, Argentina 10–15 November 1997.