



ASSOCHAM NEW DELHI DECLARATION ON BIOTECHNOLOGY 2003

The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India

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THE ASSOCHAM NEW DELHI DECLARATION ON BIOTECHNOLOGY

ASSOCHAM continued with its pioneering initiative of organizing Millennium Biotechnology Summits. The third Summit was held at New Delhi from March 21-23, 2003, with the theme 'The Business of Biotechnology'. The declaration of the Summit was arrived at after three days of erudite and intensive interaction.

The Summit noted the progress achieved in creating a congenial atmosphere for Biotechnology in India, the progress in diverse fronts by the Central and State Governments and entrepreneurs in the past years. The lack of adequate venture capital and funding mechanisms was a matter of grave concern.

Enthused by the all round positive response and synergy developed between the different constituents in India, the talented human capital, the rich biodiversity, a vast agriculture base, vibrant IT and pharmaceutical industries, the Summit was confident that India had the potential and opportunity to develop as a 'global biotech industry hub'.

To make this dream a reality, ASSOCHAM urges the Government to :

1. Formulate and announce a National Biotechnology Policy.
2. Institutionalize a Biotechnology Regulatory Commission as the single window mechanism for biotechnology policy and regulation.
3. Establish a National Biotechnology Development Fund with an outlay of around \$ 1 billion (Rs.4,800 crores) under the control of an autonomous management structure to develop this infrastructure-intensive industry.
4. ASSOCHAM believes that Indian agriculture is in an emergency situation. Doing more of yesterday, therefore, would not take us forward. ASSOCHAM believes that biotechnology offers the solution of Indian agri problem. Therefore, recommends rapid development of agroindustries such

as biotechnology, biofertilizer, biopesticides, biofermentation etc. including development and use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

5. ASSOCHAM believes that Rich scientists create Rich India. So it urges the Government to create an enabling environment for biotechnologists in publicly funded institutions to become 'biotechnopreneurs' by permitting them to hold 'sweat equity' in private companies.
6. Start new national institutions of Biotechnology – IIBTs, on the same pattern as IIITs (Indian Institute of Information Technology) or IITs. Alternatively, re-engineer selected national laboratories to up-grade their status to Indian Institutes of Biotechnology where industrial research and academic work go hand in hand. This would help link industry to academia in a very short time and strong manner.

ASSOCHAM believes that we must strengthen our education of basic biological sciences; basic research in biological sciences has to be the pedestal on which to build biotechnology. We must distinguish it from Information Technology as the rules in biology are not universal.

7. Enlarge, through public and private institutions, the human resource base in specialized areas of biotechnology and in transdisciplinary areas of convergence between biology and IT, biology and engineering.
8. As the livestock sector directly affects the nutritional security, poverty, rural development, women empowerment and health of the majority of rural population who are marginal or landless farmers, direct support to the use of biotechnological tools should receive top priority in Indian agriculture.
9. Recognizing the development of secondary agro-industries at the village level is essential ensure that people take advantage of biotechnology to add value to agriculture crops.

10. Permit biotech industry to utilize the facilities, infrastructure and human resources of publicly funded institutions on attractive terms, encourage joint R & D programmes.
11. To give the necessary support to biotechnology IPRs around the country, the patent offices should be modernized urgently. Apart from physical infrastructure, at least 300 patent examiners, specially trained in biotechnology and bioinformatics, should be added.
12. Initiate debate to create awareness and encourage public participation in the decision-making process on issues related to biotechnology and make it a Mass Movement and help India emerge as a Global Leader in Biotechnology.

ASSOCHAM believes that India can become a Global Center Bio R & D work, particularly in Bioinformatics, New Drug Development and Bioprospecting and therefore:

13. ASSOCHAM recommends strong marketing of India's attractiveness as depository of a rich Gene Bank and Human Resources as it was accomplished in the IT sector.

Finally, ASSOCHAM commits itself to become the voice of India's Bio-Entrepreneurs and work towards their development and success.

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