



Opening Address

by

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in the

**Opening Plenary of the Eleventh Meeting of the
Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity**



**XI Conference of Parties
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
HYDERABAD INDIA 2012**

**on
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**in
Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India**

Mr Nallari Kiran Kumar Reddy, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh;

Mr Hoshino Kazuaki, representative of Environment Minister of Japan;

Mr Ryu Matsumoto, former Minister of Environment, Japan;

Mr S Vijaya Rama Raju, Minister of Forest, Environment, Science & Technology, Government of Andhra Pradesh;

Ms Amina Mohamed, Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme;

Dr Braulio De Souza Dias, Executive Secretary, Secretariat of the CBD;

Dr Tishya Chatterjee, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests;

Ms Minnie Mathew, Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh;

Mr M Samuel, Special Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh;

Mr M F Farooqui, Special Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests;

Mr Olivier Jalbert, Secretariat of CoP-11;

Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you all for this important biodiversity conference, which we are deeply honoured to host in Hyderabad, the capital city of Andhra Pradesh.

As I accept the gavel from Mr Hoshino Kazuaki, as the representative of CoP-10 President, I would like to pay my tribute to the Japanese

Government for their support towards implementation of the biodiversity agenda set by CoP-10 for this decade.

I also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all CBD Parties for reposing faith in us for hosting CoP-11. This is an onerous responsibility which we had accepted with all humility, but with the confidence that with your support and cooperation, we can take the global biodiversity agenda forward in this UN Decade on Biodiversity.

Biodiversity, the variety of life on earth, is vital to social and economic development, and is indeed fundamental to our survival. The goods and services provided by biodiversity not only yield global benefits, but are of immense value at the local level as well. This is especially true for countries like ours where biodiversity is directly linked with providing livelihoods to and improving socio-economic conditions of millions of our local people, thereby contributing to sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

Its continuing loss, largely because of human activities, including over-consumptive lifestyles should therefore be a concern to us all. Assuming that we can continue to survive and flourish with business as usual approach would be a grave error, owing either to our ignorance or arrogance which we may not even live to regret. All recent studies and reports point to compelling reasons as to why immediate action is called for to address the challenge of biodiversity loss.

The Global Biodiversity Outlook-3 has indicated that current trends in biodiversity loss are bringing us closer to potential tipping points that would

catastrophically reduce the capacity of ecosystems to provide services essential for our survival. On a somewhat positive note however, this assessment predicts that action taken over the next decade or two and the direction charted under the Convention on Biological Diversity will determine whether the environmental conditions on which human civilization has depended for thousands of years will continue beyond this century. The message from GBO-3 thus is loud and clear.

To address this concern, having adopted an ambitious Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for 2011-2020, and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing, we are now at a critical juncture here at CoP-11, in the 20th anniversary of CBD, when we must agree to the road map as well as the means for implementation of what we adopted in Nagoya.

As the first CoP to be held after adoption of the Strategic Plan, establishment of a platform for science-policy interface on biodiversity, and Rio+20, CoP-11 provides us with a unique opportunity to further build on these positive developments and outcomes.

I am sure that none of us wants to have repeated in 2020, what the global community had to announce to the world in 2010, that the 2010 biodiversity target had not been met. The future generations will not forgive us for this apathy and neglect of the only one planet we have. Let us remind ourselves that we have not inherited this earth from our ancestors, but borrowed it from our children.

Thus, the decisions that CoP-11 takes in the next two weeks here in Hyderabad would lay the foundation for achieving the Aichi targets so as to ensure that by 2020, ecosystems are resilient and continue to provide essential services, thereby securing the planet's variety of life, contributing to human well-being and poverty eradication, provided sustained and focused efforts are made by all stakeholders.

India, a recognized mega-diverse country rich in biodiversity, with just 2.4% of the land area, accounts for nearly 7% of the recorded species even while supporting 18% of the human as well as cattle population. The biotic pressure on our biodiversity is therefore immense. Notwithstanding the tremendous demographic pressure and development imperatives, we are implementing progressive, unique and landmark programmes relating to biodiversity, such as:

- The Joint Forest Management for sharing of benefits from forests with local people;
- Decentralized governance through elected local level bodies for planning economic development (Panchayati Raj);
- Enactment of Biological Diversity Act in 2002 in response to the post-Rio changing paradigms relating to biodiversity;
- Recognition of forest rights to traditional forest dwellers through Forest Rights Act 2006; and
- National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme with an annual investment of over USD 7 billion, which is by far the largest sustainable livelihood and poverty alleviation programme, with afforestation, irrigation and water conservation built in strategically for legally guaranteeing green jobs.

In India, which has a long history of conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, measures for biodiversity conservation understandably did not start with the CBD. Environment protection is enshrined in our Constitution, and over a period of time, a stable organisational structure has been developed for environment protection.

Post CBD, the most significant initiative taken by India was the enactment of the Biological Diversity Act in 2002 which gives effect to the provisions of the CBD, including those relating to access and benefit sharing. India is one of the first few countries to have enacted such a legislation.

We have thus a great deal to offer to the world in terms of our experience in protecting biodiversity with the active participation of the local communities. At the same time, we have much to learn from the experience of other countries on this front.

India has also been fortunate to have had leaders who had the vision to think far ahead of their times and foresee the environmental crisis facing us today, much before the term sustainable development was coined, and climate change and biodiversity became buzzwords. Mrs Indira Gandhi, the late Prime Minister of India was the only Head of Government, other than the host country, Mr Olof Palme, Prime Minister of Sweden, who was present at the UN Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, when in her well-known thought-provoking speech, she had emphasized that while environmental concerns have to be addressed, this cannot be at the cost of unrelenting efforts to eradicate poverty. Mrs

Gandhi in fact was the one who set the stage for India to be a leader in balancing the development imperative with that of ecological security.

Nearly four decades later, as one of the fast-emerging economies of the present-day world, it is once again the time for India to lead from the front, and demonstrate that poverty alleviation can happen and development aspirations of a young nation be met. However, the challenge before us, as before all other developing countries, is to strike the right balance between addressing environmental concerns and the need to eradicate poverty. For the developed world, the challenge is how to change consumption patterns, because it cannot be only about more efficient use of resources, but it also has to be about reworking of consumption patterns. Thus, there is clearly a need to forge partnership and work together to attain these twin objectives.

The essence of CBD is very aptly captured in a famous dictum of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation: *'There is enough in the world for everyone's needs, but not for any one's greed'*.

We have indeed come a long way since the CBD was adopted 20 years ago. Much progress has been made in giving effect to the provisions of the Convention, including adoption of two key protocols. But despite this progress, biodiversity remains in a precarious state.

I express my satisfaction at the outcomes of the sixth CoP-MoP of the Biosafety Protocol held here last week. I am happy to note that Parties have put in place an agreed process for addressing issues relating to risk assessment and management of LMOs including, ~~there~~^{by} socio-economic

perspective. I assure you that during its Presidency, India would provide full support and facilitate further discussion on these important issues.

While CoP-10 under the sagacious leadership of Japan produced some significant outcomes, the real challenge lies in implementation. CoP-11 is the first milestone for ascertaining the progress made inter alia towards implementation of the Strategic Plan and Aichi biodiversity targets; setting of national targets and review of NBSAPs; facilitation of early entry into force of Nagoya Protocol on ABS; and targets for resource mobilization. Given this historic opportunity that CoP-11 presents, I wish to highlight here some of the expectations that we have, alongwith the key challenges that we face in meeting those expectations.

I also look forward to your active support and participation in taking the biodiversity agenda forward through CoP-11. We hope that the momentum built at CoP-10 and carried through the intersessional work in this interregnum will help us in moving forward on all these issues.

We are also hopeful that the faith of the comity of nations in multilateralism that was resurrected through the adoption of Nagoya Protocol at CoP-10, would be perpetuated and reaffirmed here at CoP-11.

The establishment of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) earlier this year is expected to further contribute to the implementation of the CBD and other biodiversity related conventions, not only by providing information, analysis, policy-relevant scenarios and related capacity building, but also by assisting countries in

identifying the policies and actions needed to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. We therefore look forward to this platform becoming fully operational. This CoP is expected to provide advice and direction on the relationship of CBD's SBSTTA with this new and independent intergovernmental body, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of its own work, ensuring synergies and avoiding duplication of work.

On Nagoya Protocol, the good progress made by its Intergovernmental Committee, especially in the second meeting held in New Delhi in July 2012, has set the ground for further work in preparation for the Protocol's implementation that would also contribute in catalyzing the pace of ratifications. India would like to facilitate this process during its Presidency to ensure that the first meeting of the governing body of the Protocol is held in parallel to the next CoP. In the meantime, there is a need to maintain the momentum and consider outstanding issues of the work plan in the intersessional period.

With our experience, albeit limited, in implementation of the domestic ABS legislation, India is making meaningful contributions in the deliberations of Nagoya Protocol.

I take this opportunity to inform you that Government of India has already approved the ratification of the Nagoya Protocol on 4th October 2012. The process for depositing the instrument of ratification is underway and is expected to be completed soon.

On Strategic Plan, when reviewing the progress in implementation, including setting of national targets and updating of NBSAPs, we at CoP-11 need to adopt decisions that strengthen the supporting mechanisms for this ambitious plan, such as capacity building, raising awareness and technology transfer.

The need of Parties to increase their capacity has to be met through more structured capacity development processes on a continuous basis. We must also promote more effective scientific and technical cooperation among Parties on technology transfer which has been lacking so far. This cannot be achieved with the efforts of governments alone. Effective engagement of all stakeholders is vital for the success of this Convention.

CBD is unique in the way the indigenous and local communities, who are very often the holders of traditional knowledge associated with biological resources, have been involved in deliberations on relevant issues. The contributions of the 8j Working Group in protection of this traditional knowledge have been significant. We hope that the developments on ABS and TK related issues under CBD would have positive implications on negotiations in other multilateral fora such as WIPO, WTO and WHO.

As a country with a vast coastline as well as two important groups of islands in the Indian Ocean, we have much interest in issues relating to marine and coastal as well as island biodiversity. The outcomes of regional workshops on ecologically and biologically significant areas, sustainable

fisheries and voluntary guidelines on biodiversity inclusive EIAs, are some of the issues that would have to be looked at by this CoP.

Resource mobilization is the most important unfinished agenda that we have inherited from CoP-10. While adopting the ambitious Strategic Plan, CoP-10 could not agree on targets for funding as the means to achieve Aichi biodiversity targets.

Friends, this is the time of reckoning for us when we have been provided with another singular opportunity to collectively decide on committing resources, so as to infuse confidence in Parties and to generate momentum for implementation of Aichi biodiversity targets. If we miss this one chance, it would be our collective failure making it nigh impossible to achieve the Aichi biodiversity targets by 2020. Needless to emphasise that expenditure on biodiversity needs to be looked at actually as an investment that will reap benefits for us and our future generations.

While we acknowledge that assessment of biodiversity financing is an ongoing process, some interim commitments and targets on resource mobilization must be agreed to here, failing which attainment of Aichi targets would be severely impacted considering their time-bound nature.

The present global economic crisis should not deter us, but on the contrary encourage us to invest more towards amelioration of the natural capital for ensuring uninterrupted ecosystem services, on which all life on earth depends.

Let us all be inspired by what Mahatma Gandhi said: *'The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems'*. So let us commit ourselves to what we are capable of doing.

The decisions that this conference takes would provide us with a road map for charting the path towards reversing biodiversity loss. I am confident that with your support and cooperation, we would be able to succeed in our endeavour and come up with the Hyderabad road map, that would help us to create a better world for ourselves and our children.

The concept of *'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'* in Sanskrit from one of our ancient texts, meaning *'The whole world is one single family'*, signifies by implication, that any power in the world, big or small, cannot have its way disregarding others.

The logo of CoP-11 highlighting the critical linkage of biodiversity with livelihood security, and the slogan: *'Nature Protects if She is Protected'* should also inspire and encourage us to protect, biodiversity on which we so completely depend for our survival.

On our part, India stands committed to the implementation of the three objectives of the CBD in a balanced manner, and my delegation is ready to make positive and meaningful contributions so as to ensure successful outcomes in CoP-11.

I once again welcome you all in Hyderabad, and wish that you have very constructive and fruitful negotiations with clear outcomes in the next two weeks.

Thank you.
