



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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STATEMENT BY

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

TO

**TO THE COUNCIL OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT
FACILITY AT ITS TWENTY-FIRST MEETING**

Washington, D.C., USA, 14 – 16 May 2003

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Chief Executive Officer,
Distinguished members of the Council,
Colleagues,

I am pleased to have this opportunity once again to address the GEF Council and to report briefly on some of the main developments under the Convention on Biological Diversity of relevance to your work.

Before doing so, however, I would like to reiterate how the developments at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the World Summit on Sustainable Development have given a new dynamism and purpose to the work under the Convention. They marked the final stage in the transition from policy development to implementation that was first apparent at the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in 2000. Thus, the Strategic Plan adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its sixth meeting will give a clearer focus to action under the Convention and is expected to underlie the implementation of all programmes of work over the next few years. The adoption of a target date of 2010 to achieve a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss—and its endorsement by the World Summit—will have a profound effect on the way the Convention operates. It will introduce a greater sense of urgency into our work—and a greater need to produce measurable results from our activities.

The renewed direction and vitality of the Convention process is evident from the activities that have taken place since your last meeting.

Mr. Chairman,

The first event of direct interest to the GEF was the convening, in early December last year, of an Open-ended Expert Workshop on Capacity-building for Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-sharing.

The main purpose of the Workshop was to develop an action plan for capacity-building on access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing. The action plan would meet the needs and priorities of developing countries by matching them with existing expertise and initiatives and examining the potential role of various institutions in its implementation. The Action Plan developed by the Workshop outlines key areas for capacity-building, mechanisms for the implementation of capacity-building in those key areas, and coordination arrangements. The Plan also proposes for consideration a number of approaches for implementation, based on experience and past practice.

This Plan will be forwarded, through the *Ad hoc* Working Group on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-sharing, for consideration and adoption to the Conference of the Parties at its seventh meeting, to be held in Kuala Lumpur next year. You may, however, recall that, at its sixth meeting, the Conference of the Parties already decided that the GEF, as the institutional structure operating the financial mechanism, should provide financial resources for projects that assist in the implementation of the Action Plan.

Let me turn now to the eighth meeting of the Convention's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), which was held in March. The main theme of that meeting was mountain biological diversity, a new thematic area for the Convention but one that corresponds to the existing GEF operational programme on mountain ecosystems. The Subsidiary Body agreed on a framework for a programme of work in this thematic area, which will be further developed during the inter-sessional period and at the ninth meeting of SBSTTA. The resulting draft will be submitted to the Conference of the Parties at its seventh meeting.

SBSTTA also reviewed two of the longest-standing thematic work programmes under the Convention: those on inland waters and on marine and coastal biodiversity. It produced a proposed revised programme of work on inland water biodiversity for the consideration of the Conference of the Parties. With regard to marine and coastal biodiversity, the Subsidiary Body recommended, among other things, that the Conference of the Parties should initiate a process to refine the existing programme of work to take into account recent developments and new priorities. In particular, the revised programme of work should take into account the recommendations made on mariculture, marine and coastal protected areas and genetic resources of the deep seabed.

SBSTTA is not mandated by the Conference of the Parties to submit recommendations on financial matters. Nevertheless, there is no question that the adjustments to these two major programmes of work will ultimately entail new or additional guidance to the financial mechanism when they are considered by the Conference of the Parties.

SBSTTA also considered the broad question of its operations, including the question of strategic planning, the assessment of its recommendations to the Conference of the Parties, and its input to the multi-

year programme of work of the Conference of the Parties up to the year 2010.

The main outcome of SBSTTA's consideration of these strategic items was a recommendation that, until 2010, no new items for in-depth consideration should be added to its agenda, with the exception of island biodiversity. Instead, the in-depth review of existing programmes of work should be treated as a priority.

This recommendation was taken up by the Inter-sessional Meeting on the Multi-Year Programme of Work of the Conference of the Parties up to 2010, which was held immediately after SBSTTA. In its turn, the Inter-Sessional Meeting broadly concurred with the Subsidiary Body and recommended to the Conference of the Parties that, for its eighth to tenth meetings, the only new item for in-depth consideration should be island biodiversity. The Inter-sessional Meeting also recommended that, at each of those meetings, selected ongoing existing programmes of work should be the subject of in-depth review in order to assess progress, identify constraints in implementation and make whatever adjustments might be necessary. At the same time, the Conference of the Parties would also look at progress in the implementation of the Strategic Plan and in achieving the 2010 target. It would also look at the operation of the mechanisms in place in support of implementation, including the financial mechanism and the clearing-house mechanism.

Of the other items addressed by the Inter-sessional Meeting, let me say a few brief words first on technology transfer and cooperation and then on access and benefit-sharing.

The issue of technology transfer is central to the spirit of the Convention and will be discussed in depth by the Conference of the Parties at its next meeting. The Inter-sessional Meeting focused on the more generic, legal and socio-economic aspects of technology transfer, while, at its next meeting, SBSTTA will deal with the more specific issues, in particular, the types of technology and cooperation required for the implementation of the individual programmes of work. Indeed, at its most recent meeting, SBSTTA did look at specific technologies of relevance to mountain biodiversity in its consideration of the programme of work for that thematic area. Whatever the outcome of the in-depth consideration of the item by the Conference of the Parties, there is no doubt that this area will require financial support, as well as support in terms of experience and expertise, in the years to come.

As you know, the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of genetic resources is one of the three objectives of the Convention. At its last meeting, in April last year, the Conference of the Parties adopted the Bonn Guidelines on this issue, which, in many ways, constituted a breakthrough in efforts to achieve this objective. The World Summit on Sustainable Development went a step further and called for negotiations within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity for an international regime to promote and safeguard the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The Inter-sessional Meeting provided the Parties to the Convention with their first opportunity to exchange views on the nature and scope of such a regime. Further views will be gathered during the course of the year and the issue will be taken up again at the second meeting of the *Ad hoc* Working Group on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-sharing, which will be held next December.

Mr. Chairman,

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety now has 48 ratifications and will probably have entered into force by the time of your next meeting. The document before you on relations with conventions provides a very adequate account of the background and recent developments regarding GEF support to capacity-building to prepare countries for the entry into force of the Protocol. May I simply reiterate the importance of this capacity-building for the effective functioning of the Protocol, particularly with regard to the Biosafety Clearing-House, which is a central tool for implementation. Without being able to fully utilize the Biosafety Clearing-House from the outset, countries simply will not be in a position to fulfill their obligations under the Protocol. It is therefore vital that the valuable work undertaken by GEF in this area be pursued with continued urgency and vigour. In this respect, I would like to stress the importance of assisting in the development of national biosafety clearing-houses, where appropriate, and of building capacities at the national level to promote a sense of ownership and a bottom-up approach.

Mr. Chairman,

The Secretariat of the Convention is acutely aware of the need to develop synergies with the other Rio conventions and other biodiversity-related instruments. We know that the building of such synergies is also a matter of great interest for this body. Such synergies lead to a more efficient

allocation of scarce resources and also help ensure that work carried out under different forums is mutually reinforcing.

Our efforts in this direction are continuing. This week, the *Ad hoc* Technical Expert Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change will hold its third meeting. It is hoped that, at this meeting, the Expert Group will be able to finalize its work so that its report on interlinkages between biodiversity and climate change and advice on the integration of biodiversity considerations into the implementation of the climate change convention and the Kyoto Protocol may be made available later in the year. Next week, the joint liaison group of the three Rio conventions will meet to discuss the preparations for a workshop on synergies at the national level. This workshop is to be organized by the climate change secretariat with the support of the other two Rio conventions.

At the intergovernmental level, SBSTTA, at its last meeting, considered ways of promoting mechanisms to facilitate the synergistic implementation of the Rio conventions, within the context of its discussion on the programme of work of the biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands. In reviewing the programme of work on inland water biodiversity, SBSTTA took great pains to attempt to harmonize activities under the Convention on Biological Diversity and those of the Ramsar Convention. Finally, the Open-ended Inter-Sessional Meeting, of which I have spoken earlier, recommended that the Conference of the Parties request the Executive Secretary to develop a global partnership on biodiversity comprising the major biodiversity-related organizations, with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity facilitating the process in order to enhance synergies, avoid duplication of effort and improve the implementation of biodiversity-related agreements.

We believe that this sort of cooperation is not only desirable; it is essential if we are to optimize efforts to achieve the 2010 target, as set by the Conference of the Parties and endorsed by the World Summit.

The Inter-Sessional Meeting considered in some depth the question of evaluating progress toward the achievement of the 2010 target. It made a number of recommendations to the Conference of the Parties concerning national reporting processes, national implementation and national biodiversity strategies and action plans, and review and evaluation of progress. Next week, a key meeting of experts drawn from Governments and international and non-governmental organizations will be held in London to focus particularly on meeting this challenge. The meeting has

been jointly organized by the Convention Secretariat, the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre and the United Nations Development Programme and has three objectives, namely:

- Understanding and measuring biodiversity loss;
- Exploring and identifying how existing and proposed initiatives to reduce biodiversity loss could address the 2010 target; and
- Exploring and identifying how to report on progress and achievements.

I look forward to reporting to you on the outcome of this meeting and, in particular, on ideas regarding how the financial mechanism can best be harnessed to help achieve the 2010 target.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the outgoing Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the GEF, Mohamed T. El-Ashry, who has provided wise and solid direction to the GEF since its inception. He has contributed enormously to the growth of the GEF as the foremost source of funding for the global environment. All concerned with the Convention on Biological Diversity have greatly appreciated the collaboration he helped build between the Convention and the GEF. We wish him well for the future and look forward to continuing that collaboration with his successor.

I thank you for your attention and wish you a successful meeting.