



**CONVENTION ON  
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

Please Check Against Delivery

**STATEMENT BY**

**HAMDALLAH ZEDAN  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

**CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

**To the 19<sup>th</sup> Session of the**

**GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FORUM (GBF)**

**Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 6-8 February 2004**

Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to have the opportunity to address this 19<sup>th</sup> session of the Global Biodiversity Forum. Over the years, these sessions have provided practical and forward-thinking inputs to the meetings of the Parties to various biodiversity related conventions.

The subject of this forum, “Biodiversity and Prosperity”, places biodiversity and the well-being of people on an equal footing. The Millennium Development Goals, which place poverty reduction and environmental sustainability side by side, echo such a relationship. Naturally, however, there have been conflicts, potential or inherent, between conservation and development. Historically, material prosperity has not been achieved in harmony with biodiversity conservation but rather through simplifying and destroying ecosystems and over-exploiting the goods and services they provide.

In recent years, however, it has become increasingly apparent that it is ultimately self-defeating to try to pursue prosperity at the expense of the environment. We cannot simply cash in biodiversity for development or achieve lasting prosperity with global biodiversity diminishing at ever faster rates. It has become clear that the simplified ecosystems we would create would inevitably be toppled by disasters, diseases, and invasive species.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Convention on Biological Diversity clearly identifies biodiversity and prosperity as inseparable. Its cornerstone is that biodiversity is necessary for sustainable development. It calls not for conservation for its own sake – but for sustainable use so that biodiversity not only contributes to the well-being of people now, but also to the benefit of future generations.

I believe we came to a crossroads in 1992. At the time there were those who argued for development alone, and those who pointed to its unacceptable impacts. There were those who felt that the conservation of biological diversity, although desirable in its own right, was a second priority behind economic and social development and poverty eradication. Things changed gradually but significantly over the past ten years, culminating in the recognition by the World Summit on Sustainable Development that biodiversity plays a critical role in overall sustainable development and poverty eradication and is essential to our planet, human well-being and to the livelihood and cultural integrity of people.

The Convention on Biological Diversity had its tenth anniversary of entry into force less than two months ago on 29 December 2003. It started as a set of principles to which we all agreed to adhere. It has evolved into a comprehensive programme of work, which is now moving fully into a phase of implementation. We have also set ourselves the target “to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the

benefit of all life on Earth”. That target, and its importance, was endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

As the Convention fully enters this implementation phase, it has become an important mechanism to develop and apply approaches that contribute to achieving the 2010 target whilst enabling Parties to provide a fulfilled and healthy life to their peoples. In order to gain more widespread recognition and support for our efforts, it is essential to demonstrate how the diversity of life and its sustainable use are keys to development and prosperity. Whilst nobody in this room, or at next week’s meeting, needs convincing of this fact, I often feel we could explain our case better beyond our own circle. Those in positions of power and influence, in all sectors and fields, must better appreciate that sustaining biodiversity and livelihoods, and reducing poverty, are inexorably linked. They must back-up that appreciation with the commitment to improve efforts and financial resources if we are to succeed in securing our vision of the future.

It is encouraging to note that the Parties to the Convention, as well as private sector initiatives and civil society groups, are exhibiting clear signs that they are genuinely striving for ways to sustainably use biodiversity for human development.

The three workshop themes at this forum deal with issues central to those of the Convention and in particular to this meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The first two deal with biodiversity and its role in livelihoods, alleviating poverty and in securing the future. The third deals with the important issue of technology transfer and

cooperation through capacity building with equity - which is central to achieving the other two.

Naturally, you have selected these themes in view of the agenda of the discussions next week. The seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity has three priority issues to review: the programme of work on mountain biological diversity seeks to conserve highly diverse and fragile ecosystems, thus enabling the people in mountains areas and beyond to pursue their aspirations of prosperity. The programme of work on protected areas, in accordance with Article 8 of the Convention, emphasizes biodiversity conservation but it does not lose sight of people's needs and the potential for sustainable use. Thirdly, the programme of work on technology transfer and cooperation promotes the sharing of scientific approaches to add value to the use of genes, species and ecosystems. In implementing these and other programmes of work, Parties have at their disposal an arsenal of tools and sets of guidance already developed under the Convention or being considered at this meeting: on ways to consider biodiversity in environmental impact assessments and in the efforts to mitigate climate change; incentive measures; guidelines on sustainable use, development of sustainable tourism, application of ecosystem approach, and on ways to deal with invasive alien species; how to promote communication, education and public awareness; and traditional knowledge and other matters relating to local and indigenous communities.

So I believe we are well equipped to consider the future emphasis of our work. As you know, the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties will decide on a multi-year programme of work up to 2010. It will also consider a framework for setting targets, sub-targets, and indicators. These will define what we hope to achieve in the near future and provide ways of measuring our level of success. This will be crucial in pursuit of the 2010 target, and I don't believe that we can reach this target unless policy makers, the private sector and civil society are convinced of its importance.

We need everyone's support in this endeavour. We need your vision of how to achieve - not only the 2010 biodiversity target—but a future in which the striving for prosperity is in harmony with the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, on which long-term prosperity depends. In your workshops I invite you to identify the steps that you and your organizations can take to promote and live this vision.

From my side I offer you my fullest support and my pledge that I shall spare no effort in ensuring that your deliberations are considered to the fullest at the forthcoming meeting of the Conference of the Parties and in all our relevant subsequent activities.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish you fruitful discussions and deliberations over the coming three days.

Thank you for your attention.