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Biodiversity and Climate Change

Statement

by

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on Biological Diversity**

to the

**Expert Panel on International Environmental
Governance**

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Co-Chairs,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations Organization was established in San Francisco on 24 October 1945, in the aftermath of the most devastating war waged by humanity against itself, in response to people's cry for international peace and security. It was established based on the strong conviction that multilateral cooperation is the most powerful instrument to promote and maintain peace and security in the world. For the last 61 years, the United Nations has played an irreplaceable role in maintaining peace and security in the world. In 2001, it received the Nobel Peace Prize as a worldwide recognition of its unique contribution to the promotion and maintenance of international peace and world security.

Three years later, by awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to Prof. Wangari Maathai in 2004, the Nobel Committee for the first time in its history recognized the security component of the environment. A couple of days ago, on 17th April, the Security Council, again for the first time in its history, debated the question of energy, security and climate change, thus recognizing its relevance to the implementation of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. Climate change is one of the main drivers of the environment degradation, including unprecedented loss of biodiversity, that constitutes a major new threat to peace and human security. Indeed sustainable development is the new name for peace and security. The environment degradation including the unprecedented loss of biodiversity is the new threat to peace and human security.

In Stockholm in 1972, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was established in response to people's urgent need to address the collateral damage of the industrial revolution. It was established based on the strong conviction that multilateral cooperation is the most powerful instrument to address global environmental issues. For the last thirty-five years, UNEP has played an irreplaceable role in promoting international cooperation for the environment as well as the strengthening of the international legal regime for environmental protection. Prior to 1962, fewer than 42 international environmental treaties existed. Today, there are more than 500, of which more than 60 per cent were adopted after the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. Forty per cent concern biodiversity. However, 70 per cent of the agreements adopted since the establishment of UNEP have a regional focus.

A new generation of multilateral environment agreements, the sustainable development agreed was born in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. The Rio conventions, including the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, were born in response to people's cry for the need to reconcile environmental protection with development processes. The Commission on Sustainable Development was also established in response to such a need. Over the last 15 years, and with the financial support of the Global Environment Facility and its three implementing and seven executing agencies, the Rio conventions have played an irreplaceable role in promoting global framework for addressing the interrelated issues of climate change, biodiversity and desertification.

However, such a framework has not prevented the aggravation of the unprecedented loss of biodiversity of our planet. According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the pressure from human activities on the natural functioning of

the planet has reached such an extent that the ability of ecosystems to meet the needs of future generations is now seriously—perhaps irreversibly—jeopardized. Never since human beings first appeared on Earth has anthropogenic change to our planet’s natural functioning been as destructive as it has been over the last half-century. The result has been an unparalleled extinction of biodiversity on Earth. However, the important message of the 1,395 experts from 95 countries who contributed to the Assessment is that it is possible to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target of reducing substantially the rate of loss of biodiversity. The achievement of the target will, however, require unprecedented efforts at national, regional and international level, as well as at the institutional level.

The United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements established in 1998 made it clear that the international environmental governance is fragmented and lacks global coherence. This message was echoed by the Cartagena decision adopted at the seventh extraordinary session of the UNEP Governing Council and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly. It was further elaborated by the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence. Thus, the report of the Panel entitled “Delivering as one” noted that more than 30 United Nations agencies and programmes are involved on environmental issues. More than 20 United Nations agencies are involved at some level on issues related to water and energy. The Panel observed that the three Rio conventions have up to 230 meetings annually. The figure rises to almost 400 days in total if we include other global environment agreements.

With regard to the Convention on Biological Diversity, more than 320 meetings have been convened resulting in the adoption of 226 decisions representing 1821 pages of documents since the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The Convention’s Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) convened eleven meetings and adopted a total of 121 decisions representing 1,220 individual recommendations since its first meeting in 1995. Obviously, global coherence is indeed urgently required among and within global and regional biodiversity related multilateral agreements.

Thus, the consultation of the United Nations General Assembly on the issue of the global environmental governance responds to a pressing need to promote global coherence and synergies. I would like therefore to convey to His Excellency Ambassador Peter Maurer and His Excellency Ambassador Enrique Berruga, my deep gratitude for the honor bestowed on me in my capacity as the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity to share with the members of the General Assembly, the measures initiated to enhance synergies and complementarities between the biodiversity related conventions. Of course, building consensus on institutional issues always requires extensive consultations and is time-consuming. However, this should not be used as a pretext to postpone measures that need to be urgently taken to enhance the efficiency of the current environmental architecture.

It is with this sense of urgency and responsibility that the 4,000 participants in the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Curitiba, Brazil, in March 2006 agreed on a new era of enhanced implementation of the three objectives of the Convention, namely the conservation of biological diversity, its sustainable use and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of

genetic resources. The new era calls for enhanced coordination with other biodiversity-related conventions, institutions and processes with a view to, *inter alia*, facilitating exchange of information, exploring harmonized reporting, developing value-added joint work programmes and exploring liaison arrangements for greater coherence in intergovernmental organizations and processes. A new era of enhanced collaboration with partner institutions was born in Curitiba:

Partnership among the Rio conventions

Since 2001, the Joint Liaison Group, which includes the executive secretaries of the three Rio conventions as well as the chairs of the subsidiary bodies of the conventions, has provided a useful framework for increased coordination, exchange of information and promoting synergistic activities. The Group prepared a paper on options for enhanced cooperation among the three Rio conventions which was welcomed by the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, by the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice at both its twenty-third and twenty-fourth meetings, and by the Conference of the Parties of the UNCCD at its seventh meeting. In adopting its decision VIII/30, the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the CBD for the first time:

- Requested the Executive Secretary to propose, through the Joint Liaison Group, specific mutually supportive actions for the Secretariats of the Rio Convention, Parties, and other organizations;
- Recognized the consideration of reduced emissions from deforestation by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as a potential mechanisms for the integration of forest biodiversity conservation and sustainable use within climate change mitigation planning;
- Recognized the potential of the UNFCCC five-year programme of work on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change to act as a nexus for collaboration and cooperation on biodiversity and climate change; and
- Called for the enhanced integration of climate change impacts and response activities within all of the programmes of work of the Convention.

More specifically, in decision VIII/2, the Conference of the Parties welcomed decision 12 of the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD inviting the executive secretaries to strengthen the joint work programme including efforts to achieve the relevant 2010 biodiversity targets. Priority activities identified for the first phase of the joint work programme include:

- Assessments/development of assessment tools;
- Facilitation of consultations, coordination and information sharing; Promotion of regional and international networks;
- Support for policies promoting the inclusion of local communities and indigenous people in the development of sustainable use plans;

- Options for joint reporting.

Thus, the synergies among the Rio conventions call for complementarity of their respective work programmes. The decisions of COP-8 open up the possibility for the Parties of promoting a joint work programme similar to the one already adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

Moreover, the recently released report of Working Group II of IPCC on Adaptation and Vulnerability to Climate Change prepared by 1000 experts has once again demonstrated that adaptation to climate change is a strategic priority. It offers therefore a unique opportunity for Parties to consider promoting a joint work programme of the three Rio Conventions and its submission for adoption by their respective Conference of the Parties or the convening of a special joint meeting.

In this context, as a recent practical output of a joint activity, I also want to mention the informal consultation on the linkages between the conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity and climate change, including the framework of reducing emissions from deforestation, which was successfully convened with the kind support of the Government of Canada at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on 17 March 2007.

Public awareness and education offer another area for enhancing the collaboration of the three Rio conventions. The celebration in 2006 of the International Year on Deserts and Desertification as well as the celebrations of the International Day for Biodiversity on 22 May, World Environment Day on 5 June, the International Day on Desertification on 17 June offered and offer ample opportunities for promoting joint activities between the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification and UNEP. For example, the preparation for the celebration on 22 May 2007 of the International Biodiversity Day under the theme “Biodiversity and Climate Change” has promoted a number of joint activities with the Secretariat of the Climate Change Convention. The celebration in 2010 of the International Year on Biological Diversity will provide another unique opportunity for joint activities between the three Rio conventions.

However, promoting synergies at the international level among the Rio conventions requires also enhanced coordination at the national level among the different governmental agencies involved and their respective focal points. Therefore, consideration could be given to the establishment of a joint liaison committee of the three Rio conventions at the national level. Such a committee may also include the focal points of other biodiversity related conventions.

Partnership between the biodiversity-related conventions:

Decision VII/26 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity called for the creation of the Biodiversity Liaison Group, including the

Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the World Heritage Convention. Pursuant to a decision adopted at the eight meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the membership of the committee was extended to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Since 2004, the Biodiversity Liaison Group has held five meetings to explore opportunities for synergistic activities and increased coordination, and to exchange information. At its fifth meeting, held in Gland, Switzerland, on 14 September 2006 under the chairmanship of the Ramsar Convention, the Group adopted concrete measures for enhancing collaboration and promoting synergies. These measures include: joining forces for the provision of capacity-building; the possibility of a virtual biodiversity academy; the creation of a joint calendar; joint representation in meetings and a commitment from all conventions to celebrate the each other's international day. Thus, for example, the International Biodiversity Day will be celebrated in Montreal on 22 May as a joint celebration of the Biodiversity Liaison Group with the participation of Mr. Yvo De Boer, the Executive Secretary of the Climate Change Convention.

Since 1998, joint work plans between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention have been adopted on a regular basis with the objective of promoting the conservation, sustainable and wise use of biodiversity, especially in wetlands. The joint work plan for the period 2000-2001 was commended by the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (decision VI/21) in May 2000 as a useful example of future cooperation between CBD and other conventions. After assessing the third work programme for the period 2002-2006, the Conference of the Parties recognized in decision VIII/20 that the close cooperation between the CBD and the Ramsar Convention sets a good example in building synergies between conventions to effectively deliver the objectives of each respective convention.

The fourth joint work programme, covering the period 2007-2010, has been now finalized and has been submitted to the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention at its meeting in Gland, Switzerland, in February 2007. It will be submitted for the consideration of the twelfth meeting of SBSTTA to be held in Paris in July 2007. In support of the fourth joint work programme, a CBD/Ramsar meeting on scientific guidance on the links between biodiversity, water, wetlands and climate change was held on 23-24 March at the Ramsar Secretariat in Gland with the financial support of the Government of Canada.

The joint work programmes with the Ramsar Convention are a good example and demonstrate that the Parties may wish to consider promoting joint work programmes with other members of the Biodiversity Liaison group focusing on areas of common interests, including in particular, emerging scientific issues.

Parties may wish to pilot the establishment of a joint biodiversity liaison group at national level comprising the focal points of the biodiversity related conventions. The recent establishment by the Parties of the Ad Hoc Working Group on enhancing cooperation and coordination among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions is

a major welcomed development. The results of the first meeting of this innovative mechanism held on 26-28 March 2007 in Helsinki may guide other relevant processes. The Parties of the Biodiversity related conventions may wish to launch a similar initiative.

Partnership between scientific bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions:

For the first time in the history of the biodiversity-related conventions, a joint meeting of the chairs of the scientific subsidiary bodies and the executive secretaries will take place in Paris on 1 July 2007 in conjunction with the twelfth meeting of SBSTTA. The meeting aims at promoting scientific collaboration among the scientific bodies of the biodiversity related conventions for achieving the 2010 biodiversity target and looking ahead to the scientific underpinnings of a possible post-Johannesburg target. The meeting will be held with the participation of the Chair and the Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Also for the first time in the history of the two organs, a joint meeting between IPCC experts and the Bureau of the twelfth meeting of SBSTTA was recently held in Montreal on 19-20 March 2007. The meeting was convened with a generous contribution from the Government of Canada and offered a unique opportunity to assess the implications for biological diversity of the report of the IPCC Working Groups I and II. It opened new avenues for enhanced cooperation between the two bodies as well as with the scientific body of the UNFCCC.

Moreover, the scientific bodies of the CBD and the UNFCCC met for the first time for an evening joint session in Montreal in December 2005 during SBSTTA-11, which happened to coincide with the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC. The emerging issues of adaptation to climate change as well as avoiding deforestation offered a unique opportunity for Parties to consider convening a joint session of the scientific body of the two Rio conventions.

The need to mobilize the scientific institutions in support to the implementation of the enhanced phase of implementation of the Convention inspired the establishment in Curitiba in March last year of a scientific partnership. Indeed a consortium of eight major scientific institutions was established including the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle de France, the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Mexican Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources and the Museum of Nature of Montreal. The first meeting of the consortium was held in Kew in September 2006. A plan of action was adopted which will be reviewed at the second meeting to be held in Paris in November this year.

Partnership for achieving the 2010 biodiversity target

Promoting greater cooperation through thematic clustering and setting a timeline is essential to achieving the objectives of the Convention. As rightly pointed out by the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence, more than 30 United Nations agencies and programmes are involved on environmental issues and a number of them are actively engaged in the implementation of the objectives of the CBD, including the achievement of the Johannesburg biodiversity target. To this end, and for the first time, a Heads of Agencies Task Force for achieving the 2010 biodiversity target was established in March 2006 at the margins of the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. Serving as a platform for exchange of information among its members it promotes complementarity and maximizes collective efforts for the achievement of 2010 biodiversity target. Nine Heads of Agencies are now members of this innovative mechanism.

The first meeting of the Task Force was hosted by the Director General of IUCN in Gland on 15 September 2006. The participants agreed that there is a need to develop a common communication message to be used by the nine partners for raising public awareness and promoting outreach activities. Moreover, an issue-oriented group on the 2010 biodiversity target under the Environmental Management Group has been suggested.

Partnership with regional biodiversity-related conventions and processes:

Building synergies and complementarities with regional biodiversity conventions and processes is essential for the success of the enhanced phase of implementation of the three objectives of the Convention.

In Africa, the Secretariat is working with the African Union Commission to promote the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, as amended by the 2003 Maputo Summit of the African Union as the implementation arm of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Africa. A decision to that effect has been submitted for the consideration of the ninth ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union Heads of State to be held in Accra in July 2007. Moreover, an agreement with the Secretariat of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has been reached in February this year for promoting synergies between the biodiversity component of the NEPAD Environmental Action Plan and the work programme of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

A similar working relationship is being established with the Secretariat of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), which includes also the promotion of South-South Cooperation. In addition, at the initiative of the President of AMCEN, the Secretariat facilitated, with the generous financial contribution from the Government of the Netherlands, in convening a meeting in Montreal in November 2006 between the secretariats of Central Africa Forests Commission (COMIFAC), the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The meeting served promoting South-South cooperation among the three

largest hydrological and forest basins in the world—the Congo basin, the Amazon basin and the Heart of Borneo—and was part of an initiative aimed at preparing a multi year plan of action on South-South Cooperation for the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention at the request of the Chairman of the Group of 77 and China.

Another project is to twin the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, one of the oldest biodiversity agreements in Africa with the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Nature Habitats, one of the oldest biodiversity agreement in Europe. Moreover, an agreement will be signed in Strasbourg in November this year to promote the Bern Convention as a regional mechanism for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Europe.

In addition, a meeting with the secretariats of the regional conventions aimed at promoting protected areas will be held in Rome at the margins of the meeting of the Convention's Ad Hoc Working Group on Protected Areas. On issues related to marine and coastal biodiversity, similar working arrangements are being finalized with the Barcelona Convention on the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea as well as other regional seas programmes.

Indeed, the variety of global and regional multilateral biodiversity-related agreements can be a tremendous asset to enhance biodiversity agenda provided that efforts are guided by global coherence, enhanced cooperation and complementarity. Such coherence cannot be achieved without enhanced coordination at national level and between the various national agencies and institutions involved in regional and global intergovernmental processes.

However, the United Nations is what its Member States want it to be. The same is true for international environmental governance: the states decide. International environmental governance triggers negotiations and requires time-consuming consultation to build consensus. However, the magnitude of the environmental challenges we are facing requires urgent responses, including the institutional level. We cannot afford just to wait for perfection before we act. In this regard the strengthening of the United Nations Environment Programme is essential.

For all issues related to the protection of the environment, postponing action is no longer an option. There should be no excuses for delaying measures aimed at enhancing the global environmental architecture. Any measure aimed at providing a more integrated and coherent structure of the environmental activities of the United Nations' system will always meet the full support of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity—the convention on life on Earth.

I thank you very much for your kind attention.