



Convention on
Biological Diversity



STATEMENT

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank Carol Ritchie for inviting me to extend my stay in Sweden and speak at this conference. Having just participated in a productive meeting on a post-2010 vision for biodiversity with many of your colleagues, and some of you as well, I welcome the opportunity to discuss protected areas and biodiversity with you on this 100th anniversary of national parks in Europe.

As you know, this is a critical moment in the struggle to preserve the diversity of life on Earth. 2010 has been declared by the UN to be the International Year of Biodiversity, and it is by this time that the international community has resolved to significantly slow the rate of biodiversity loss worldwide. The European Union has gone one step further: here in Sweden in 2001, in the city of Gothenburg, the EU resolved to stop biodiversity loss in Europe by 2010 and launched the first EU Sustainable Development Strategy.

These steps and other actions taken have been a great beginning toward protecting biodiversity; yet today neither the international community nor the EU is likely to meet its target. Species worldwide continue to go extinct at a tremendous rate – up to 1,000 times the natural background rate. Last year's IUCN Red List revealed that 38 per cent of all examined species worldwide are at a high risk of extinction. In Europe the situation is also troubling. A recent 2010 progress report by the European Environmental Agency (EEA) showed that up to 40–85 per cent of habitats and 40–70 per cent of species of European interest continue to have an unfavourable conservation status, with 45 per cent of assessed marine fishery resources not being used sustainably, and some stocks still falling outside safe biological limits.

And yet there is also cause for hope. In addition to its grimmer statistics, the EEA report also revealed that up to 17 per cent of EU land area is now included in the Natura 2000 network and 16 per cent is protected under national instruments. This is particularly encouraging, because not only are protected areas the cornerstones of biodiversity conservation, they also constitute an important stock of natural, cultural and social capital, providing economically valuable goods and services, contributing to the livelihoods of the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of society, and strengthening the ecological health of the planet.

Indeed, when protected areas incorporate participatory and equitable governance mechanisms, they can yield significant benefits far beyond their boundaries. As such, creating and strengthening protected areas is an integral method of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. With the recent launch of the landmark report “TEEB for Policymakers” – which comprehensively draws the links between biodiversity, poverty and development – there should be no doubt that protected areas must continue to be a focal point of biodiversity preservation efforts in the years to come.

The importance of protected areas is underscored by the role they can play in climate change adaptation strategies. For example, they provide unbroken blocks of intact habitat and places for species and ecosystems to shift their ranges. And they enhance ecosystem resilience and recovery and provide protection against the physical impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels, rising temperatures, and extreme weather events.

All of this is why the CBD is committed to protected areas. In February 2004, our Parties made the most comprehensive and specific protected area commitments ever made by the international community by adopting a Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA). The

CBD PoWPA enshrines development of participatory, ecologically representative and effectively managed national and regional systems of protected areas, where necessary stretching across national boundaries. From designation to management, the PoWPA can be considered as a defining framework or “blueprint” for protected areas for the coming decades. It is a framework for cooperation between Governments, donors, NGOs and local communities, for without such collaboration, programmes cannot be successful and sustainable over the long-term.

At COP9 in Bonn, the CBD adopted a landmark decision to enhance implementation of the PoWPA. The COP encouraged Parties, relevant international organizations and NGOs to enhance activities and provide resources towards organizing and forming regional technical support networks in order to assist countries in implementing the PoWPA. The COP also urged Parties to finalize the ecological gap analysis not later than 2009 and invited Parties to develop sustainable financing plans. The COP further invited Parties to explore funding opportunities for implementing the PoWPA in the context of addressing climate change.

At the meeting in Bonn, the government of Germany launched the LifeWeb Initiative, which acts as a clearing-house to link donors and recipients in the designation and improvement of protected areas management globally. The main aim of the LifeWeb Initiative is to match voluntary commitments by States to designate new protected areas, and/or improve highly underfunded existing sites with the respective commitment of donors for dedicated financing and co-financing for these areas. I am pleased to say that the LifeWeb coordination office is now fully functional in the secretariat.

Since the adoption of the programme of work, 27 countries have reported the establishment of about 5900 new protected areas. Covering approximately 60 million ha of terrestrial and marine areas, they include national parks, nature reserves, nature conservation areas, nature parks, landscape reserves, natural monuments, protected landscapes, ecological lands, scientific reserves and areas of community importance, and 50 marine protected areas.

As of 2008 there are more than 120,000 nationally designated protected areas worldwide, covering 21 million square kilometres of land and sea. The terrestrial protected areas listed in World Database on Protected Areas cover 12.2% of the planet’s surface area. However, the marine protected areas occupy only 5.9% of the world’s territorial seas and only 0.5% of the extraterritorial seas. Out of the 15 regions of the world recognized by the UNEP-WCMC, nine regions (Americas, East and Southeast Asia, Eastern and Southern Africa, Western and Central Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean) have 10% of their terrestrial area under protected areas, whereas only three (Australia/New Zealand, South America and North America) of the 15 regions have more than 10% their marine areas protected.

Based on the information available from National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans and national reports, coverage of protected areas as a percentage of a country’s territorial area is available for 114 CBD Parties. 68 countries out of this total have kept more than 10% of their territories under protection (with 33 countries having more than 15% of their terrestrial area protected); 23% (26 countries) have 5 to 10% and only 14.5% of countries (6 in number) have less than 5% of their land designated as protected areas.

An overlay of nationally designated protected areas with the world’s terrestrial ecoregions reveals that 12 out of the 14 terrestrial biomes have more than 10% of their area protected. However, the degree of protection of the ecoregions within these biomes vary, as out of the 825 terrestrial ecoregions more than 5% are completely protected, 50% have 10% of their

area protected and 8% have less than 1% of their area under protection. Out of the 232 marine ecoregions, only 39% of them have 10% of their area under protection, whereas 50% have less than 1% of their area under protection. Considering the current annual growth rate of marine protected areas (4.6%) achieving the 10% target of the CBD strategic plan and the PoWPA marine target may well nigh be possible within the next 20 years. We will soon assess our progress in this regard, as our PoWPA is scheduled for in-depth review at COP10 in Nagoya, Japan.

It is wonderful that this EUROPARC conference is celebrating 100 years of national parks in Europe, the first nine having been established here in Sweden in 1909. I am also happy to note that the conference coincides with the joint inaugurations of Kosterhavet national park, Sweden's 29th national park, and Ytre Hvaler national park in Norway on September 9. The Koster sea, home to more than 6000 marine species, will certainly augment the efforts of Sweden in conserving the marine biota and help in further implementing the PoWPA and CBD Coastal and Marine biodiversity programme of work.

With the International Year of Biodiversity and the CBD's tenth Conference of Parties in Nagoya rapidly approaching, I urge you all to continue with the good work you have done to date. The coming year presents an unprecedented opportunity, as biodiversity is on the international agenda as never before. The last three meetings of G8 environment ministers have all endorsed the 2010 Biodiversity Target and called for increased engagement at the highest political levels, putting biodiversity loss on the agenda at G8 summits in Heiligendamm in 2007, Hokkaido/Toyako in 2008, and L'Aquila in 2009. In September of next year, just prior to COP10 in Nagoya, heads of state and government attending the sixty-fifth session of the UN General Assembly will for the first-time ever discuss the importance of biodiversity.

We need to take advantage of this political momentum. I invite EUROPARC and its partners to join in the celebrations of the International Year of Biodiversity in a befitting manner. None of us should doubt the urgency of preserving the diversity of life on Earth, for the long-term health and wellbeing of humanity ultimately depends on the success of our efforts. To quote the Swedish writer and Nobel Laureate Eyvind Johnson: "Hope and volition can bring us closer to our ultimate goal: justice for all, injustice for no one." Now is the time for long-term vision and action.

Thank you for your kind attention.