



Convention on  
Biological Diversity



## STATEMENT

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**THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE  
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

**ON THE OCCASION OF**

**THE FIFTH INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE ON  
BIODIVERSITY IN EUROPE**

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Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of Liège's native sons, the novelist Georges Simenon, once said "the lake and the mountains have become my landscape, my real world" – a sentiment anyone in this room can well understand.

I would like therefore to thank the Government of Belgium for hosting our meeting today. It is fitting that your Fifth Intergovernmental Conference on Biodiversity be held here in Liege; the University of Liège is an ideal venue for our meeting, as more than ever before we need to mobilize science in support of the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention, and particularly scientists of the next generation. Belgium is an ideal host, as the country will have the European Union presidency during the second half of 2010, which will coincide with a series of unique events for the biodiversity family. 2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity, and a high-level meeting exclusively devoted to biodiversity will be convened during the sixty-fifth session of United Nations General Assembly in New York on 20 September 2010. The Assembly will be followed in October 2010 by the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit. I look forward to our continued collaboration with the Belgium authorities for meeting the 2010 biodiversity agenda and would like to thank the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences for the major role they are playing in coordinating the International Year of Biodiversity in Belgium.

Thanks must also go to the Government of Norway for their central role in bringing today's conference about. Norway has had a long-standing commitment to environmental and biodiversity issues in particular. Indeed the sustainable development journey started with Gro Harlem Brundtland and the report *Our Common Future*, which helped provide momentum for the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, where the Convention on Biological Diversity was opened for signature. The unique support of Norway to the agenda of the Convention is also demonstrated by the Trondheim International Conferences on Biodiversity, which since 1993 have become a major event in the life of the Convention. We in the Secretariat look very much to the contribution of the sixth such conference, to be held in February 2010, to the success of the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit. Your meeting could not have found a better chair than Ms Tone Solhaug, the CBD focal point and member of the Bureau of SBSTTA 14.

I would like also to pay tribute to outgoing chair, Mr Robert Lamb, and through him to the Government and people of Switzerland for their commitment to biodiversity. Indeed, the interim secretariat of the Convention was born in Geneva in 1993, the same year that the principles of the cooperation in the field of environmental protection in Europe were adopted in Lucerne. The Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy was adopted in Sofia as a European response to support the implementation of the Convention.

As the Convention is entering a critical phase of its existence, this is also a critical time for European Governments to get together as single family to discuss the 2010 biodiversity target and beyond. Earlier this month, under the Swedish presidency of the European Union, a high-level conference was held in Strömstad on "Visions for Biodiversity Beyond 2010—People, Ecosystem Services and the Climate Crisis". The Chair's conclusions from this meeting are a major contribution to defining the post-Johannesburg biodiversity vision. Let me therefore pay tribute to Ms Åsa Norman and through her to the Swedish authorities for this achievement. This was yet another contribution of Sweden to the biodiversity agenda from the host of the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. I would like also to thank Åsa as a member of COP9 Bureau for her support in convening the fifth meeting of the Bureau in Strömstad.

The European ministers attending the Strömstad meeting had before them The Message from Athens adopted in April this year at the international high-level conference on biodiversity convened by the European Commission. The message was loud and clear: the 2010 target will not be met, even though substantial progress has been made notably with the development of the Natura 2000 network, now covering 17 per cent of the territory of the European Union.

The report by the European Environment Agency (EEA) submitted to the meeting stated that: “The target of halting biodiversity loss in Europe by 2010 will not be achieved...European biodiversity continues to be under serious pressure and...the policy response, although successful in some areas, is not yet adequate to halt the general decline.” This report is the first to measure progress toward the 2010 target using internationally agreed-upon indicators, selected within the pan-European Streamlining European 2010 Biodiversity Indicators (SEBI 2010) process – which makes its findings all the more worrying.

According to the report, 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. Forty-five per cent of assessed marine fishery resources are not being used sustainably, with some stocks still falling outside safe biological limits. The overall risk of extinction of wildlife appears to have increased, while livestock genetic diversity also remains at risk. Invasive alien species continue to be a threat, especially in marine systems. Urban sprawl and abandonment of agricultural land are putting pressure on natural and semi-natural areas, and the impact of climate change is starting to be visible. The ecological footprint of Europe has been growing progressively since 1960, with overall demand increasingly exceeding the total capacity for biological production.

The WWF *Living Planet Report 2008* showed that our global footprint now exceeds the world’s capacity to regenerate by about 30 per cent, and that if the demands we are currently making on the planet continue unabated, by the mid-2030s we will need the equivalent of two planets to maintain our lifestyles. The *Living Planet Report* unsurprisingly came to a conclusion that parallels that of the EEA report: “It appears increasingly unlikely that even the modest goal of the Convention on Biological Diversity, to reduce by 2010 the rate at which global biodiversity is being lost, will be met.” The 80 national reports received so far by the Secretariat to the Convention confirmed that the 2010 Johannesburg target will not be met. Let me echo Ms Åsa Norman and call on all the 33 European Parties that have not yet submitted their national report to do so as soon as possible and no later than end of November 2009.

What are the consequences of the failing to meet the 2010 target? In the short term, many of the costs of continued biodiversity loss will be borne by countries outside of Europe: natural capital constitutes 26 per cent of the total wealth of poor countries, making subsistence farmers, fishermen, the rural poor and traditional societies the most vulnerable to further degradation. Most of the estimated 30 million small-scale fishers in the developing world are dependent on coral reefs for their food and livelihood. An estimated 300 million people, most of them poor, depend substantially on forest biodiversity, including non-timber forest products, for their subsistence and survival including around 150 million people belonging to indigenous groups. Overall nearly 60 per cent of the poorest people inhabit fragile vulnerable landscapes, with most depending on these natural resources for their survival. As biological resources continue to disappear, more and more people will sink into poverty in these places.

And yet in the mid- to long-term, no one will be immune from the consequences of the continued loss of biodiversity compounded by climate change. Deforestation is currently estimated to be responsible for 20 per cent of annual human-induced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, as forests account for as much as 80 per cent of the total above-ground terrestrial carbon. In addition, peatlands, which only cover 3 per cent of the world’s terrestrial surface, store 30 per cent of all

global soil carbon or the equivalent of 75 per cent of all atmospheric carbon. Hence, as forest and peatland loss continue, a much greater proportion of global carbon ends up in the atmosphere and not in terrestrial biomass, precipitating dramatic and damaging changes in global climate: rising sea levels, desertification, expansion of tropical diseases, and a greater frequency of extreme weather-events. Our ability to withstand these changes will also be worsened by the loss of biodiversity. For example, the devastating floods that ravaged Europe a few years ago are thought to have been exacerbated by a lack of wetlands to absorb the overflow, as more than 80 per cent of all wetlands and floodplains in the Danube basin have been lost in the last 100 years.

The message arising from Athens and Strömstad is also clear and loud: the biodiversity target is achievable provided that we increase our efforts with a sense of urgency and commitment in order to progress more quickly than we have done to date in the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

This sense of urgency underpins the developing vision of a post-2010 Strategic Plan for the Convention on Biological Diversity with the participation of all stakeholders—without exception, including business. I am very pleased that Mr David Cooper will moderate one of your sessions and present the ongoing initiatives of the secretariat on the preparation of the new strategic plan of the Convention. I would like to convey my gratitude to the representatives of the triple presidency of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, under the chairmanship of Germany, for agreeing last week in Montreal with Canada and Netherlands on the Nagoya Road Map on Business and Biodiversity. One of the most important challenges we face is to integrate biodiversity concerns in all relevant sectors.

At this critical moment, the political climate is ripe for a long-term push toward mainstreaming biodiversity protection into all sectors of society. 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. And as I mentioned earlier, in September of next year, just prior to the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in Nagoya, heads of state and government attending the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly will for the first time ever discuss the importance of biodiversity.

Now is the time to take advantage of this political momentum. The Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy has long supported the development and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) in Europe, promoting a consistent approach and common objectives throughout the continent. In 2002, the PEBLDS harmonized its rolling programme of work with the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The time has now come to adjust this unique instrument to fit the new enhanced implementation phase of Convention.

The new and revitalized Pan-European Biodiversity Strategy will complement and support the revised national biodiversity strategies and actions, which will integrate the Nagoya biodiversity vision before the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2012. I am very pleased to note that in the task ahead you will be guided by your chair, who is also a member of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. It is extremely important that the reenergized Pan-European Strategy on Biodiversity synergizes with the post-2010 Strategic Plan and biodiversity targets that the Parties to the Convention will adopt in Nagoya. I am here today with you to offer the full cooperation of the Secretariat as a partner for the preparation and implementation of the 2020 Pan-European Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan as a key European platform for implementing the Nagoya Biodiversity Compact

Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian playwright, poet and Nobel Laureate, once said: “At every crossroads on the path that leads to the future, tradition has placed 10,000 men to guard the past.” The future before us has to be one where the value of biodiversity is widely appreciated and protecting ecosystems is a part of our everyday lives. To this end, the 6.2 billion citizens of the world will need protect the present and secure the future of our children. This is the objective of the International Year of Biodiversity, and so I am very pleased to unveil in French, English and Flemish the official logo of this unique event in the history of the Convention on Life on Earth – for indeed biodiversity is life, and biodiversity is OUR life. Let us do our all to improve on the past, and set out on the path to a sustainable future.

Thank you for your kind attention.