



**Convention on  
Biological Diversity**



## **STATEMENT**

*by*

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**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

*at the*

**SYMPOSIUM ON QUEBEC'S MARINE PROTECTED AREAS**

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*Please check against delivery*



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COP 10 / MOP 5

Distinguished representatives and experts,  
Ladies and Gentleman,

I wish to first express my heartfelt congratulations to the organizers of this Symposium for conducting this important event in this beautiful place, Rimouski. Your collaborative efforts indeed signify the global celebration of 2010 International Year of Biodiversity.

We are now less than two years away from the target year set at the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development for the establishment of representative networks of marine protected areas. Despite some remarkable efforts made by different countries, the overall progress is far from satisfactory towards achieving the 2012 target, with still less than 1 per cent of the ocean surface designated as protected areas, compared to nearly 15 per cent of protected-area coverage on land.

The third edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-3), launched world-wide last month, alarmed the world community with gloomy news on our biodiversity status. The GBO-3 showed serious declines in marine living resources, losses of coastal habitats, elevated pollution levels, and poor water quality in many areas. Overall deterioration of the marine environment is further exacerbated by the effects of climate change, such as sea-level rise and sea-temperature rise. Global concern is also increasing due to the potential impacts of ocean acidification as a direct consequence of increased carbon dioxide emissions. Coastal communities and local economies are at the forefront of degradation of the marine environment and the impacts of climate change, and the long-term sustainability of their socio-economic prosperity is at risk.

Pressures on marine and coastal biodiversity will continue to increase, with 50 per cent of the world's population living along the coasts by 2015. Concentration of population and expanded urbanization on the coast will continue to add stresses on coastal resources. When the human pressures are combined with the impacts of climate change, the ecological consequences will be severe. While the threats affecting marine and coastal biodiversity are rapidly increasing, our efforts remain to be further strengthened and expedited.

The Plan of Implementation of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development called for the establishment of representative networks of marine protected areas. Most marine and coastal protected areas are on the continental shelf and in coastal waters. An estimated 6.3% of territorial seas are protected, while only 0.5% of oceans overall are under protection. Approximately 43% of all MPAs lie in the tropics, with most of the remainder in the northern hemisphere. The northern mid-latitudes and the southern temperate and polar latitudes are less well represented.

Coral reefs and mangroves seem to be the best protected ecosystems, with an estimated 15-22% of the area of the world's reefs protected, 17% of mangroves, 10% of seagrasses and 2% of seamounts. Deep-sea and open-ocean habitats are generally under-represented in MPAs.

Significant progress has been made, however, by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity through the adoption of their decision IX/20, which contains scientific criteria for identifying ecologically or biologically significant marine areas in need of protection in open-ocean waters and deep-sea habitats. The criteria include uniqueness or rarity; special importance for life-history stages of species; importance for threatened, endangered or declining species and/or habitats; vulnerability, fragility, sensitivity or slow recovery; biological productivity; biological diversity; and naturalness. In addition, the Parties adopted scientific guidance for selecting areas to establish a representative network of marine protected areas. The forthcoming

tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Nagoya will discuss the next challenge of applying these criteria to identifying sites in marine areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

Ensuring the effective management of existing marine and coastal protected areas is as important as establishing new areas. Effective management depends on developing strong partnerships between different levels of government involved in the management process, as well as the sectors involved in activities around the MPAs.

Further challenges for effective management lie with the long-term capacity development. The CBD Secretariat has undertaken a number of sub-regional and regional capacity-building workshops in the context of the programme of work on protected areas, which also addresses MPAs. These workshops have strengthened capacity for (a) conducting ecological gap analysis; (b) developing sustainable financing; and (c) using guidelines for improving/assessing management effectiveness through exchange of country experiences, case-studies, available tools and resources.

The *LifeWeb* Initiative, which was launched at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, aims at supporting the implementation of the programme of work on protected areas under the Convention through enhancing partnerships at a global level. The purpose of the initiative is to match voluntary commitments for the designation of new protected areas and the improved management of existing areas with commitments for dedicated co-financing for managing these areas. Climate change will present additional challenges to MPA managers, but the establishment of additional MPAs will provide effective ways and means to increase the resilience of vulnerable ecosystems.

In Nagoya, at its tenth meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity will adopt a new Strategic Plan for the period 2011-2020, which is expected to contain strategic goals and targets for mobilizing urgent and comprehensive action at the international level in order to reverse the tide of rapid biodiversity loss.

The Nagoya meeting of the Conference of the Parties will be preceded by a high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in New York exclusively devoted to biodiversity. I wish to encourage all of you to celebrate this unique event and join forces with the Secretariat to bring the challenges of marine biodiversity conservation to the attention of high-level policy-makers and to engage all relevant stakeholders and partners.

This year, 2010, offers a major opportunity for biodiversity conservation, an opportunity that cannot be missed. We look forward to enhanced collaboration with partners and experts in Quebec to seize this critical moment.

Thank you for your attention.