



**Convention on  
Biological Diversity**



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

## **STATEMENT**

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

**ON THE OCCASION OF**

**THE HIGH-LEVEL INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON THE  
STRATEGY FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION:  
*GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY OUTLOOK 3***

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Life in harmony, into the future  
いのちの共生を、未来へ  
COP 10 / MOP 5

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is a Chinese proverb that says: “If you are thinking one year ahead, sow seed. If you are thinking ten years ahead, plant a tree. If you are thinking 100 years ahead, educate the people.”

Today more than ever this wisdom needs to be spread far and wide, and nowhere more so than when it comes to biodiversity. Indeed, today more than ever we need to educate all sectors of society on the importance of our biological resource base and teach them how to preserve it. That is one of the key messages of the third edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook 3 (GBO3), released this May by the Secretariat. GBO3 is based on approximately 500 scientific journal articles, 120 national reports submitted by governments to the Convention, and a study on future scenarios for biodiversity. Subject to an extensive independent scientific review process, the publication of GBO3 is one of the principal milestones of this 2010 International Year of Biodiversity.

Using its multiple lines of evidence, GBO3 demonstrates that the target set by world governments in 2002, “to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level,” has not been met.

None of the twenty-one subsidiary targets accompanying the overall 2010 biodiversity target can be said definitively to have been achieved globally, although some have been partially or locally achieved. Ten of fifteen headline indicators developed by the CBD show trends unfavorable for biodiversity. No government claims to have completely met the 2010 biodiversity target at the national level, and around one-fifth state explicitly that it has not been met.

Indeed, the current biodiversity statistics are as worrying as ever. Species that have been assessed for extinction risk are on average moving closer to extinction, with amphibians facing the greatest risk and coral species deteriorating most rapidly in status. The abundance of vertebrate species, based on assessed populations, fell by nearly one-third on average between 1970 and 2006, and continues to fall globally, with especially severe declines in the tropics and among freshwater species.

Natural habitats in most parts of the world continue to decline in extent and integrity, notably freshwater wetlands, sea ice habitats, salt marshes, coral reefs, seagrass beds and shellfish reefs; although there has been significant progress in slowing the rate of loss of tropical forests and mangroves, in some regions. Moreover, crop and livestock genetic diversity continues to decline in agricultural systems. For example, more than sixty breeds of livestock are reported to have become extinct since 2000.

In addition, the five principal pressures directly driving biodiversity loss (habitat change, overexploitation, pollution, invasive alien species and climate change) are either constant or increasing in intensity. While there has been significant progress in the increase of protected areas both on land and in coastal waters, 44 per cent of terrestrial eco-regions and 82 per cent of marine ecoregions fall below the target of 10 per cent protection. The majority of sites judged to be of special importance to biodiversity also fall outside protected areas.

As I mentioned, scientists from a wide range of disciplines came together as part of the preparation of GBO3 to identify possible future outcomes for biodiversity during the current century, based on observed trends, models and experiments. Projections of the impact of global change on biodiversity show continuing and often accelerating species extinctions, loss of natural habitat, and changes in the distribution and abundance of species, species groups and biomes over the 21st century. There is a high risk of dramatic biodiversity loss and accompanying degradation of a broad range of ecosystem services if the Earth system is pushed beyond certain thresholds or tipping points. Moreover, earlier assessments have underestimated the potential severity of biodiversity loss based on plausible scenarios, because the impacts of passing tipping points or thresholds of ecosystem change have not previously been taken into account.

Examples of potential tipping from GBO3 include:

- The dieback of large areas of the Amazon forest, due to the interactions of climate change, deforestation and fires, with consequences for the global climate, regional rainfall and widespread species extinctions.
- The shift of many freshwater lakes and other inland water bodies to eutrophic or algae-dominated states, caused by the buildup of nutrients and leading to widespread fish kills and loss of recreational amenities.
- Multiple collapses of coral reef ecosystems, due to a combination of ocean acidification, warmer water leading to bleaching, overfishing and nutrient pollution; and threatening the livelihoods of hundreds of millions directly dependent on coral reef resources.

However, GBO3 also indicates that there are greater opportunities than identified in earlier assessments to address the biodiversity crisis while contributing to other social objectives, for example by reducing the scale of climate change without large-scale deployment of biofuels and accompanying loss of natural habitats. Overall, biodiversity and ecosystem changes could be prevented, significantly reduced or even reversed if strong action is applied urgently, comprehensively and appropriately, at international, national and local levels.

GBO3 sets out a number of elements that could be considered in a future strategy to reduce biodiversity loss, and avoid the worst impacts of the scenarios it analyzes. These elements will be a key input into discussions by world leaders and heads of state at the special high level segment of the United Nations General Assembly on 22 September. They will also help form the basis of discussion of the strategic plan of the CBB currently being considered for the next decade and due to be agreed at the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit in October.

The elements include:

- Continued and intensified direct intervention to reduce loss of biodiversity, for example through expanding and strengthening protected areas, and programmes targeted at vulnerable species and habitats
- Continued and intensified measures to reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity, such as preventing nutrient pollution, cutting off the pathways for introduction alien invasive species, and introducing more sustainable practices in fisheries, forestry and agriculture.

- Much greater efficiency in the use of land, energy, fresh water and materials to meet growing demand from a rising and more prosperous population.
- Use of market incentives, and avoidance of perverse subsidies, to minimize unsustainable resource use and wasteful consumption.
- Strategic planning to reconcile development with the conservation of biodiversity and the maintenance of the multiple services provided by the ecosystems it underpins.
- Restoration of ecosystems to safeguard essential services to human societies, while recognizing that protecting existing ecosystems is generally much more cost-effective than allowing them to degrade in the first place.
- Ensuring that the benefits arising from use of and access to genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, for example through the development of drugs and cosmetics, are equitably shared with the countries and cultures from which they are obtained.
- Communication, education and awareness-raising to ensure that as far as possible, everyone understands the value of biodiversity and what steps they can take to protect it, including through changes in personal consumption and behavior.

In addition, GBO3 notes that the linked challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change must be addressed by policymakers with equal priority and in close co-ordination, if the most severe impacts of each are to be avoided. Conserving biodiversity and the ecosystems it underpins can help to store more carbon, reducing further build-up of greenhouse gases; and people will be better able to adapt to unavoidable climate change if ecosystems are made more resilient with the easing of other pressures.

Ultimately, GBO3 concludes that we can no longer see the continued loss of biodiversity as an issue separate from the core concerns of society. Realizing objectives such as tackling poverty and improving the health, wealth and security of present and future generations will be greatly strengthened if we finally give biodiversity the priority it deserves.

For example, GBO3 points out that for a fraction of the money summoned up instantly by the world's governments in 2008-9 to avoid economic meltdown, we can avoid a much more serious and fundamental breakdown in the Earth's life support systems.

In the end, unless there is swift, radical and creative action to conserve and sustainably use the variety of life on Earth, natural systems that support economies, lives and livelihoods across the planet are at risk of rapid degradation and collapse. To quote Ban Ki-Moon: "We need a new vision for biological diversity for a healthy planet and a sustainable future for humankind."

With this in mind, I would like to reiterate my call to China as one of the leading nations of the world to raise its voice on the international stage and promote a new equilibrium between humans and nature during the New York and Nagoya Biodiversity Summits, as well as beyond 2010.

Confucius said: "Let the states of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection...and all things will be nourished and flourish." The wisdom of China will go a long way to help guide us forward in this time of unprecedented environmental destruction.

Thank you for your kind attention.