STATEMENT

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ON THE OCCASION OF

THE INDIAN SCIENCE CONGRESS

7 JANUARY 2011

CHENNAI, INDIA

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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,

Confined to bed and nearing the end of his life, Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman, the first Indian scientist to win the Nobel Prize, said "I do no want to survive my illness if it means anything less than a hundred per cent active and productive life." The commitment to research exemplified by the man widely considered to be the father of Indian science is typical of the Indian spirit. Gandhi said that "a nation's culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people." With its long list of world-class scientists, including four Nobel Laureates, can anyone doubt that Indian hearts and souls are defined by hard work in pursuit of higher goals?

Today the world needs the help of Indian minds more than ever. Last May the third edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook confirmed that because of human activities species worldwide continue to disappear at up to 1,000 times the natural background rate of extinction. The report further warns that without concerted action massive further loss of biodiversity is projected to occur before the end of the century and that ecosystems are approaching tipping points beyond which they will be irreversibly degraded, with dire consequences for human wellbeing.

Marine biodiversity in particular continues to decline more quickly than ever. This is in part attributable due to the problems caused by climate change and ocean acidification. In the Arctic, for example, by 2032 the under-saturation of key carbonate minerals as a result of ocean acidification will disrupt the marine food web. In addition, one third of reef-building corals worldwide face elevated risk of extinction due to climate change.

That is why at its tenth meeting held this past October in Nagoya, Japan, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity called upon all 193 Parties to the Convention to highlight the role of marine and coastal ecosystems within climate-change mitigation and adaptation; to promote sustainable management, conservation and enhancement of natural carbon sequestration services of marine and coastal biodiversity; and to enhance the resilience of coastal and marine ecosystems.

The Parties also adopted the new Strategic Plan of the Convention for the period 2011-2020, which includes three important targets for oceans, namely:

1. By 2015, the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification are minimized;

2. By 2020, all fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants are managed and harvested sustainably, legally and applying ecosystem-based approaches;

3. Also by 2020, at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas are conserved through protected areas.

Including all stakeholders in the implementation of the new Strategic Plan will help us achieve these and other targets. That is why at COP10 Parties endorsed a plan of action on cities and biodiversity adopted by the Nagoya Biodiversity City summit attended by more than 200 mayors. 122 legislators from around the world attending the GLOBE meeting on parliamentarians and biodiversity declared their support for the implementation of the new Strategic Plan. Representatives of 34 bilateral and multilateral donor agencies agreed to translate the Plan into their respective development cooperation priorities. In addition, a Multi-Year Plan of Action on South-South Cooperation on Biodiversity for Development was adopted by the G77 and China.

The meeting also adopted the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization. Eighteen years after the Rio Earth Summit, the third objective of the CBD has finally been operationalized. The Nagoya Protocol creates a framework that balances access to genetic resources on the basis of prior informed consent and mutually agreed terms with the fair and equitable sharing of benefits while taking into account the important role of traditional knowledge. The Protocol also proposes the creation of a global multilateral mechanism that will operate in transboundary areas or situations where prior informed consent cannot be obtained.

As recommended by the Secretary General, Mr Ban Ki Moon, the new Strategic Plan was adopted as the overarching global coordinated framework on biodiversity of the whole biodiversity family. The heads of agencies, including the heads of the biodiversity-related conventions as well as the heads of NGOs attending the meeting endorsed this recommendation. Therefore the whole United Nations system with the support of civil society will assist the 193 Parties in translating the Strategic Plan into national biodiversity and action plans within two years.

Needless to say, the scientific community must be involved in this process. Increased scientific knowledge, along with an increased ability to effectively communicate that knowledge, will be central to integrating biodiversity preservation into more and more sectors of our global society. As Louis Pasteur said, "Science knows no country, because knowledge belongs to humanity, and is the torch which illuminates the world."

Indeed, the participation of scientists has been absolutely critical in the development of the Convention over the years. Without scientific underpinnings, we would not have been able to produce implementation guidelines for our various programmes of work. We would not have been able to produce three editions of Global Biodiversity Outlook. Nor would we have been able to launch such important initiatives as our Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, or similar initiatives related to the preservation of pollinator and soil biodiversity.

The need to engage the scientific community was why in 2006 Convention signed a Memorandum of Understanding with six leading scientific institutions in 2006, including the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, and the Natural History Museum of France. The purpose of the MOU is to leverage the expertise of these institutions in order to implement education and training activities to support developing countries building scientific, technical and policy skills in the area of biodiversity. Since 2006, the Convention's Consortium of Scientific Partners on Biodiversity has been extended to over ten scientific institutions.

With the International Year of Biodiversity behind us and the International Decade of Biodiversity now underway, we must take the next steps together. India as you know will host COP11 in Hyderabad in 2012. As one of the world's megadiverse countries, harbouring some 8 per cent of all plant and animal species worldwide, I hope that India and Indian scientists will take this historic opportunity to exercise leadership in the fight to save life on Earth.

As the head of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Rajendra Pachauri has stated: "We are confronted by a range of environmental threats, from soil degradation and water and air pollution to deforestation and loss of biodiversity. All of these are being affected by climate change on an increasing scale. This set of impacts will affect every segment of our economy and of our population."

As we work toward Hyderabad and beyond, there is no time to waste.

Thank you for your kind attention.