**STATEMENT BY**

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**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

**CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

**to the**

**KICK-OFF MEETING FOR THE EU BON (BUILDING THE EUROPEAN BIODIVERSITY OBSERVATION NETWORK) PROJECT**

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Dear colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all let me congratulate the EU BON consortium under the lead of Berlin Natural History Museum for getting this complex and ambitious project underway. Not only are you dealing with a diversity of institutions, data holders, data ownership arrangements, data platforms, data formats and metadata, but also with a multitude of expectations about what EU BON should deliver. Ultimately, what is needed is a world in which biodiversity information is systematically gathered, curated and made openly and freely accessible to anyone interested in analysing it, so that meaningful decision support tools and knowledge products can be developed, while ensuring that data ownership is recognized and appropriately rewarded. Clearly, the road towards this goal requires a suite of complementary strategies:

- we need to ensure that the primary observations that ultimately underpin knowledge products are gathered systematically and coherently;
- we need to mobilize data and information from all kinds of sources;
- we need to develop the mechanisms that connect the dots and enables analysis across data types and platforms;
- we need to resolve issues of attribution and ownership;
- and we need the experts to undertake meaningful analyses and assessments which can translate the science into policy relevant information.

In my view, we already have many of the pieces in place and we can count on a lot of goodwill and energy from the key players:

- We have the Biodiversity Observation Network under the Group on Earth Observations seeking to ensure that a suitable observation system for biodiversity is put in place and maintained. Such a system must be able to combine long-term site based observations, field observations, including observations from citizen scientists, and observations derived from remote sensing. In addition we need data and observations on the pressures on biodiversity and the underlying causes of biodiversity loss as well as the policy and management responses.
- We have the Global Biodiversity Information Facility which has developed the tools for combining data sets and making them interoperable. In addition to the vast number of specimen records, GBIF is reacting to the call for additional categories, including information on biological invasions, genomics, species traits and ecological data.
- We have the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services which will focus on assessing scientific information and information from other knowledge systems such as traditional knowledge, developing indicators and decision-support tools that enable policy analysis and planning processes. IPBES will hopefully provide a focus for the biodiversity modeling community as IPCC does for climate change modelers.
- The biodiversity-related conventions, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, draw on and collaborate with all these actors in order to develop effective and evidence-based global biodiversity policy.

We are also fortunate in that there is broad agreement that the pieces which individual organizations and networks and agreements pursue need to be connected. And we are fortunate that EU BON is now underway and seeking to enhance these connections. During their life time, projects like EU BON can help enormously in promoting and fostering those connections: connections between science and policy, between data providers and users, between analysts and

decision makers, between funding sources and priority needs, between different ministries, institutions, and processes.

There will be many demands and expectations facing EU BON. Under the Convention on Biological Diversity, Contracting Parties have adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 as a common framework for political action towards the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, conservation, sustainable use and access and benefit-sharing. As part of their commitment from the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Nagoya, Japan, in 2010, countries are in the process of setting national targets on the basis of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and are developing monitoring systems to track progress towards the achievement of these targets.

For many of the issues addressed through the twenty Aichi Biodiversity Targets there is a dearth of underlying data and information: There are gaps in our understanding of ecosystems and how they change as a consequence of stressors. There is a need for more and better models to analyse and predict change and deal with uncertainty and there is a need for better tools to communicate the science and make it useful for policy analysis and policy development. In addition to conceptual challenges, we find that the data and observations that exist are patchy, incompatible or inaccessible. This is why working together towards the achievement of Aichi Biodiversity Target 19 on scientific knowledge is so critically important.

Biodiversity observations, as the basis of indicators and monitoring systems, are the key currency for any attempt to review progress in implementing the Strategic Plan, be it at the global, regional, national or sub-national levels. Sound indicator and monitoring systems will be crucial over this decade in tracking progress towards our attainment of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and in providing us with feedback about what types of actions are bringing us closer or further away from meeting our goals.

A challenge for EU BON will be to demonstrate that its work is of direct relevance to countries, including countries beyond Europe, and that it responds to their needs.

With this I would like to ensure you of my full support for the work of EU BON and I wish you a very productive Symposium.

Thank you.