STATEMENT BY

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Integrating Biodiversity into Socio-Economic Landscapes

Mr. Olgierd Dziekoński, Secretary of State, the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland

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Ms. Sara Scherr, Founder and President, EcoAgriculture Partners

Mr. Marcin Palys, Rector of the University of Warsaw

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure and honour for me to address you at this first Global Landscapes Forum, held on the margins of talks in the lead up to a possible post-2015 agreement on climate change, and parallel discussions on future sustainable development goals, which emerged out of the Rio+20 Conference.

Before I begin, I would like to thank the co-organizers of the Forum, in particular the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Republic of Poland; our hosts at the University of Warsaw; as well as the Center for International Forestry Research, on behalf of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and the Research Programme on Climate Change Agriculture and Food Security, on behalf of the international consortium on agriculture and rural development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are all connected to biodiversity in one way or another.

Through the water we drink and use; the soil and land that nurtures our food, fibre, and fuel; the plants and animals that offer us discoveries in medicine; our genetic diversity that helps us adapt to change and build more resilience against climate change and natural disasters; the ways biodiversity delivers cultural and leisure benefits; and much more.

Biodiversity is the source of our health, our habitat "living space", and our humanity.

Many of our productive sectors stem from and depend on biodiversity.

For example, sectors associated with water supply, food and nutrition, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, health, energy, transport and tourism depend significantly on the health and resilience of biodiversity.

These interdependencies impact directly our human well-being and our Earth's life support system on which the welfare of current and future generations depend.

Food production, for example, depends largely on biodiversity and on the services provided by ecosystems. Our crop varieties and animal breeds, in the thousands, are made possible due to the rich genetic pool of species they originate from.

This genetic diversity of crops and livestock allows not only for adaptation to current needs, but also ensures the adaptability to meet future change, including those resulting from climate change, and the potential for further increases in yields that will be necessary to meet expected food demands.

Hence, biodiversity requires effective management, including protection, to ensure food security in times of climate variability and change.

But our reliance on the services provided by ecosystems, including forests, grasslands and agro-ecosystems, to meet the growing demands of an increased population, has an uneven focus, often undermining other essential ecosystem services linked to social and ecological well-being.

Nature is a critical asset for sustainable human development, making ecosystem management for healthy, productive, sustainable livelihoods and resilient communities fundamental across the broader landscape.

This is what the Convention of Biological Diversity entails when implementing the principles of the Ecosystem Approach. The concept places people at the center, and ecosystems as natural resource management systems with numerous functions and multiple benefits to provide to humanity.

But, as dynamic and evolving systems, ecosystems are inherently complex. And, their management and conservation takes a great deal of work, over temporal and spatial scales.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We live in a world of economic, social and environmental change.

While striving for efficiency and growth, we have to balance socio-economic and livelihood dimensions that call for more equitable returns, peace and security and resilience to the evolving global conditions.

Estimates show that ecosystems deliver essential services worth trillions each year.
Yet close to two-thirds of the world's ecosystems are considered degraded due to damage, mismanagement and a failure to invest and reinvest in their productivity, health and sustainability.

In the last 50 years, humans have transformed ecosystems and landscapes more rapidly than in any comparable period of time.

The current extent and trend of ecosystem degradation and the resulting loss of ecosystem services jeopardises the livelihoods of people and the ecological security of our planet.

Ultimately it affects all people, with more severe and immediate threats on the poor and vulnerable, women, children and indigenous peoples.

Greater attention is required to help restore ecosystems to their former condition or towards a desired self-sustaining ecological state.

It is our role to ensure that the structural and functional capacities of ecosystems and their response and interaction to other components in a landscape are properly integrated and maintained.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The role of biodiversity in sustainable development is fundamental.

While acknowledged as a contribution to sustainable development, the reverse is also important. Sustainable Development thus needs to provide the enabling conditions for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.
We need a transformational shift from all parts of society.

For example, significant changes in our consumption and production patterns, and incentive measures, are needed in order to make conservation and sustainable use more equitable and for the drivers of biodiversity loss to be reduced.

Taking a landscape approach to conserve, restore and sustainably use biodiversity can provide solutions to a range of challenges**.** From policies to practice, we have started to see inspiring cases of transformation and innovation.

For instance, experience shows that protected or community conserved forested areas within a landscape have provided significant ecosystem services, such as improved water supplies and regulation of local climate.

In turn ensuring access to ecosystem services by poor and vulnerable groups has helped alleviate poverty, reduce deforestation and degradation and enhance the carbon stocks in forests, drylands, rangelands and croplands.

Conserving and restoring ecosystems is proven to be a cost effective way to mitigate climate change and also offers a means to generate social and economic benefits and opportunities, whilst, in many cases, also offering benefits in terms of climate change adaptation (for example, improved resilience against extreme weather).

For example, the Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon, has helped to reduce deforestation in the region, together with satellite monitoring of forest cover, heightened law enforcement and land tenure regularization.

These actions have triggered important measures to help address land use and to stimulate the growth of the economy on the bases of sustainability and conservation.

As we explore our landscapes, their interactions, dependencies and objectives, I'd like to convey two messages, on how the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 can support this work.

The first is through cooperation.

Since biodiversity connects us all, how we leverage the connections will be critical to address global challenges and secure more sustainable pathways now and in the future.

For this, we need to understand the processes involved and value our ecosystems as key factors in generating and sustaining food and water security, as well as adequate nutrition, regulating climate, securing human health, and alleviating poverty.

Accordingly, in 2010, the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, providing a global framework for action for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use to contribute to sustainable development.

The Strategic Plan has been recognized and supported by the governing bodies of other biodiversity-related conventions, including the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and the World Heritage Convention, as well as by the UN General Assembly.

The Strategic Plan is therefore an excellent framework for cooperation among stakeholders with varied specific interests, allowing us all to work towards a common vision but each contributing in their own fields.

The Convention has partnered directly with many governmental and non-governmental entities to support efforts to achieve the objectives of the Strategic Plan, including its vision for 2050, its five strategic goals and twenty Aichi Biodiversity Targets, to be achieved by 2020.

In addition, many partners have independently strengthened their cooperation using the Strategic Plan as a basis for identifying relevant actions.

Given its overarching framework and sustainable development priorities, the UN General Assembly encouraged stakeholders to use elements of the Strategic Plan in the elaboration of the post-2015 UN development agenda.

But, achieving these goals is not a one-time action. It is a process - one that requires concerted efforts, resources, commitment and engagement across sectors, as well as civil society.

Cooperation across sectors will help maintain and enhance the ability of ecosystems to support sustainable increases in productivity while reducing impacts at multiple scales.

Together, we can provide benefits for producers and consumers and maintain our natural capital.

My second message is on integrating biodiversity values in other sectors.

We must learn to measure what we treasure!

While monetary values and benefits of ecosystem services are becoming more and more researched, the benefits expressed in non-monetary terms tend to be difficult to collect data on, monitor, and acknowledge.

Some values remain difficult to quantify, particularly ecosystem services not traded on markets.

Where their values are not reflected in market prices for other goods and services, there is the ongoing problem of these benefits being marginalized, and eroded, in economies.

These values are equally important to understand and reflect in policies and management.

For example, the practices and traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities have guided the management of our natural resources for centuries, if not millennia. What we benefit from the holders of this knowledge is irreplaceable, but often underappreciated.

Thus by neglecting the ecological foundation behind market goods, we omit incorporating ecological values into market mechanisms.

We also overlook the important interaction with users of biodiversity, informing individuals, companies and governments of the benefits of conserving and utilizing biodiversity, and related ecosystems services, in a sustainable manner.

The CBD has been working closely with the UN Statistical Division, the WAVES Initiative and TEEB, among other partners, to support research on natural ecosystem accounting and valuation to provide estimates of services and their economic value.

But this is just the start.

More work is needed to help strengthen the ability of countries to conduct biodiversity and ecosystem service-related assessments to inform trade-off choices in development planning and for policy decision-making.

These actions are easier said than done. But, they are achievable.

Experience on how to carry out ecosystem accounting exists and this experience needs to be shared and the approach mainstreamed.

So, in the course of today's Technical and Networking Sessions, I am interested to hear your experiences and lessons learned regarding what has worked well and not so well.

I look forward to hearing more about how we can scale up public and private efforts and enhance cooperation. These are essential ingredients to achieve the aspirations as agreed in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The major actors in both conservation and development are recognizing the critical contribution that biodiversity makes to human livelihoods, poverty eradication, empowerment and sustainable development, at large.

I am increasingly encouraged by the emerging consensus I see between previously polarised groups.

We are getting much better at identifying and implementation win-win solutions that utilise the benefits of biodiversity to improve efficiencies, increase resilience and meet multiple objectives.

However, we need a deeper understanding of the interdependencies and links within the value system across the landscape to ensure that biodiversity continues to contribute to food security, social-ecological resilience and poverty reduction.

And, equally that, in return biodiversity is sustainably used and protected, in view of mounting global and local pressures.

Moving on this track, we also need an improved understanding of how to overcome socio-political and institutional constraints to implement fully effective landscape based approaches to sustainability. And how to shift from a pilot project approach to a mainstreaming, integrated and up-scalling approach.

If we act together, we can safeguard biodiversity and put it to good use within a sustainable and resilient landscape that meets multiple needs for: food production, ecological restoration and conservation, and improved livelihoods for people.

Thank you for your attention.