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UN REPORT CALLS FOR BOLD AND ACCELERATED GLOBAL ACTION TO MEET BIODIVERSITY TARGETS BY 2020

REPORT TRACKS PROGRESS AND DRAWS ATTENTION TO IMPLICATIONS ON BROADER SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THIS CENTURY

PyeongChang/Montreal, 6 October 2014 – Bold and innovative action is urgently required if governments are to meet the globally-agreed Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and its Aichi Targets by 2020, says a United Nations progress report on the state of global biodiversity.

Launched today one year before the halfway point of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, **Global Biodiversity Outlook 4** shows that there has been significant progress towards meeting some components of the majority of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. However, in most cases, additional action is required to keep the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 on course.

The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, and its 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, were agreed by the international community in 2010 in Nagoya, Japan, and have since been re-affirmed by the United Nations General Assembly and at the Rio + 20 summit in 2012.

Meeting the Aichi Biodiversity Targets would contribute significantly to broader global priorities addressed by the post-2015 development agenda; namely, reducing hunger and poverty, improving human health, and ensuring a sustainable supply of energy, food and clean water. Incorporating biodiversity into the sustainable development goals, currently under discussion, provides an opportunity to bring biodiversity into the mainstream of decision-making.

However, reaching these joint objectives requires changes in society, including much more efficient use of land, water, energy and materials, rethinking our consumption habits and, in particular, major transformations of food production systems.

Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General, underlined the linkage between biodiversity and sustainable development: "I urge Member States and stakeholders everywhere to take GBO4's conclusions into account in their planning, recognize that biodiversity contributes to solving the sustainable development challenges we face, and redouble efforts to achieve our shared goals," he said.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) said, "The responsible management of our planet's biodiversity is motivated not only by a shared sense of responsibility to future generations. The factors prompting policy makers to safeguard biodiversity are increasingly economic in nature. Without healthy biodiversity, livelihoods, ecosystem services, habitats and food security will be compromised."

"Actions to reduce biodiversity loss will inevitably support a broad range of societal benefits and lay the groundwork for the socio-economic transition to a more sustainable and inclusive model of development," he added.

"The good news is that Parties are making progress and concrete commitments to implement the Aichi Biodiversity Targets." said Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, UN Assistant-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. "However, the report also shows us that efforts need to be significantly scaled-up if the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 is to be implemented and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets achieved."

"Our efforts can and must be strengthened by combining actions that address multiple drivers of biodiversity loss and multiple targets. The world increasingly understands the critical links between biodiversity and sustainable development. Measures required to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets also support the goals of greater food security, healthier populations and improved access to clean water for all," he said.

With the progress achieved to date, plausible pathways exist for realising an end to biodiversity loss, along with achieving global goals related to addressing climate change, land degradation and sustainable development.

ON TRACK:

In the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, progress is reported in the following areas:

Protected Areas – Target 11

The terrestrial area of the planet protected for biodiversity is increasing steadily, and designation of marine protected areas is accelerating. Nearly a quarter of countries have already passed the target of protecting 17 per cent of their land area. At the current rate of growth, the percentage targets would be met for terrestrial areas by 2020. Existing commitments to designate additional terrestrial protected areas reinforce this outcome.

However, achieving the marine component of Target 11 requires additional efforts. Progress is higher in coastal areas, while open ocean and deep sea areas, including the high seas, are much less covered. Further efforts will be needed if the other elements of Target 11, such as those related to management effectiveness and ecological representation of protected areas, are to be met. For example, while the protected area network is becoming more representative of the world's diverse ecological regions, around one-quarter of terrestrial regions, and more than half of marine regions have less than five per cent of their area protected. Importantly, today's protected areas will not be adequate to conserve many species whose distributions will shift in the future due to climate change.

Access and Benefit Sharing of Genetic Resources – Target 16

The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization enters into force on 12 October 2014 following its ratification by 51 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in advance of the deadline of 2015.

This opens up new opportunities for the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. However, further ratifications of the Nagoya Protocol, as well as ensuring that all Parties to the Protocol put in place, by 2015, legislative, administrative or policy measures and institutional structures for implementing the Nagoya Protocol are needed to increase its operationalization.

Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans – Target 17

179 of the 194 Parties to the Convention have developed National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), at least 57 of which are still current. Parties are currently updating their NBSAPs in line with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020. Twenty-six had done so by August 1, 2014.

For other Parties for which information is available, more than 40 per cent are expected to have completed their NBSAP by October 2014, and about 90 per cent by the end of 2015. The degree to which countries are implementing their updated strategies and action plans is variable however.

WHERE MORE EFFORT IS REQUIRED:

For the majority of the targets, additional efforts are required to ensure that they are achieved by 2020. For example:

Halving the Rate of Loss of All Natural Habitats, including Forests – Target 5

While global rates of deforestation are declining, they remain alarmingly high. The total area of land remaining in natural or semi-natural conditions has shown a downward trend in recent decades and would decline further by 2020 if recent trends continue.

Reduction of Pollution, including from Excess Nutrients – Target 8

Nitrogen and phosphorus pollution continues to pose a very significant threat to biodiversity, and ecosystem services globally. While more than sixty per cent of the national reports analysed for GBO-4 indicate that countries are making progress towards achieving this target, the overall evaluation is that current trends are moving us further away from the target of bringing excess nutrients to levels not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity. It was not possible to evaluate overall trends regarding other forms of pollutants, due to limited information.

Reduction of Multiple Pressures on Ecosystems Vulnerable to Climate Change and Ocean Acidification, such as Coral Reefs - Target 10

Pressures from both land-based and marine activities continue to increase. This makes it unrealistic to believe that the target will be met by 2015, as agreed. The percentage of reefs rated as threatened increased by nearly one-third (30 per cent) in the decade to 2007. Overfishing and destructive fishing methods are the most pervasive threats, affecting around 55 per cent of reefs. One-quarter of reefs are affected by coastal development and pollution from land, including nutrients from farming and sewage. Around one-tenth suffer from marine-based pollution. Local pressures are most severe in Southeast Asia, where nearly 95 per cent of coral reefs are threatened. Large marine protected areas (MPAs) already in place, or pending establishment, offer opportunities for better protection of coral reefs. Furthermore, a

recent study of the Caribbean suggests that effective action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, combined with management of local threats such as overfishing and poor water quality, would create favourable conditions for coral reefs to regenerate by the end of this century, and survive the impacts of ocean acidification.

Seeking to Prevent Extinction of Known Threatened Species and Improve Their Conservation Status - Target 12

The protection of those species most in decline is not on track to be achieved. Despite individual success stories, the average risk of extinction for birds, mammals, amphibians and corals shows no sign of decreasing. Nevertheless, dedicated conservation efforts have demonstrably prevented the extinction of several species, and further action might prevent some extinctions that would otherwise occur by 2020. The rate of increase in observed extinctions of birds and mammals has apparently slowed over the past 50 years, although lags in reporting time may lead to an underestimate of recent extinctions. For some groups such as freshwater fish, the number of observed extinctions has continued unabated for the past century. Short-term future projections of the extinction risk of species as a result of projected habitat loss generally predict a worsening situation. However, under some scenarios in which natural habitats are protected and restored, and greenhouse gas emissions are reduced, extinctions both globally and locally may be significantly reduced in the longer-term.

Ecosystem Restoration and Development of Resilience - Target 15

Substantial efforts are required if the goal of restoration of at least 15 per cent of ecosystems is to be met. A number of countries have set targets related to ecosystem restoration. For example; Belgium, Belarus, Brazil, Dominica, Japan, Malta, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the European Union, have set targets to restore at least 15 per cent of degraded lands.

About three-quarters of the national reports assessed for GBO-4 suggest that some progress is being made towards the attainment of this target. The combined initiatives currently underway, or planned, may put the world on track to restore 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, but it is hard to assess and, on the current trajectory, is not a likely outcome. Despite restoration and conservation efforts, there is still a net loss of forests - a major global carbon stock.

THE WAY FORWARD:

The challenge of achievement of many of these targets stem from the reality that based on current trends, pressures on biodiversity will continue to increase at least until 2020 and that the status of biodiversity will continue to decline.

This is despite the fact that society's responses to the loss of biodiversity are increasing dramatically, and national plans and commitments are expected to continue to increase for the remainder of this decade.

This may be partly due to time lags between taking positive actions and discernable positive outcomes. But it is more likely because responses are insufficient relative to pressures, such that they may not overcome the growing impacts of the drivers of biodiversity loss, suggesting that work to address these drivers will be a priority.

Each of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets cannot be tackled in isolation. Actions towards certain targets will have an especially strong influence on the achievement of the rest. In particular, there are targets related to addressing the underlying causes of biodiversity loss (generally those targets under Strategic Goal A), developing national frameworks for implementing the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Target 17), and mobilizing financial resources (Target 20).

A good example of this is Brazil's successes in combatting deforestation. With the use of a broad range of actions, corresponding to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and Strategic Goals, deforestation rates in the Brazilian Amazon and Atlantic Rainforest have been greatly reduced.

Interrelated public and private policy initiatives in Brazil, coordinated through the Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation, were launched in 2004. The action plan was a cross-ministry initiative, coordinated by the President's office. It includes a range of activities that relate to a number of Aichi Biodiversity Targets across all of the Strategic Goals, such as:

- Monitoring of land-cover (Target 19), both near real-time coarse resolution and annual high resolution satellite monitoring, made publicly available;
- Enforcement campaigns by Brazil's environmental agency and the federal police to crack down on illegal deforestation and logging, with interventions informed by near real-time monitoring. Businesses and stakeholders have also implemented plans to reduce deforestation to within safe limits;
- Incentive measures (Target 3), including restricting credit for rural landowners with the highest rates of deforestation;
- Expansion of protected areas and demarcation of indigenous lands (Targets 11, 18). Approximately 40 per cent of natural vegetation is legally protected by parks and indigenous reserves. From 2002 to 2009, the Brazilian Amazon Protected Area network expanded by 60 per cent; a large part of these new areas were created in regions of intense land conflict to act as green barriers against deforestation, establishing a new protected area paradigm.

In addition, as people have become more aware of the values of biodiversity (Target 1), NGO and business initiatives have implemented moratoria on soya and meat produced on recently cleared land. Public prosecutors have also installed industry requirements to exclude deforesters from their supply chains (Target 4).

Plausible pathways exist for achieving the 2050 vision for an end to biodiversity loss, in conjunction with key human development goals, limiting climate change to 2°C warming and combating desertification and land degradation. However, reaching these joint objectives requires changes in society, including much more efficient use of land, water, energy and materials, rethinking our consumption habits and in particular major transformations of food production systems.

To download the report, please visit www.cbd.int/gbo4

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Notes to Editors:

The Convention on Biological Diversity

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 194 Parties up to now, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes for implementation, the transfer of technologies, sharing information on good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is a supplementary agreement to the Convention. It seeks to ensure the safe use of living modified organisms LMOs obtained through modern biotechnology and to protect biological diversity from their potential adverse effects. To date, 167 countries, plus the European Union, are Parties to the Cartagena Protocol. The Secretariat of the Convention and its Cartagena Protocol is located in Montreal, Canada. For more information visit: www.cbd.int .

Strategic Plan for Biodiversity

In decision X/2, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, held from 18 to 29 October 2010, in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, adopted a revised and updated Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, for the 2011-2020 period. This plan provides an overarching framework on biodiversity, not only for the biodiversity-related conventions, but for the entire United Nations system and all other partners engaged in biodiversity management and policy development.

Parties agreed to translate this overarching international framework into revised and updated national biodiversity strategies and action plans within two years. Additionally, in decision X/10, the Conference of the Parties decided that the fifth national reports, due by 31 March 2014, should focus on the implementation of the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan, and progress achieved towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. For more information on the Strategic plan, please see www.cbd.int/sp
