



## PRESS RELEASE

### Canada and the United States of America Affirm Partnership on Climate Action, Clean Energy, and the Arctic and its Biodiversity

*Montreal, 14 March 2016* –The Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Mr. Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, applauds the Arctic Partnership announced Thursday by United States President Barack Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Washington, D.C. Although focused on climate action, the partnership has far-reaching consequences for biodiversity in the Arctic, including the role of indigenous peoples and their traditional knowledge.

Concerned that the Arctic is experiencing accelerated climate change and is on the frontlines of this global crisis,<sup>1</sup> President Obama and Prime Minister Trudeau pledged, in a joint statement, to embrace opportunities and confront challenges in the Arctic with indigenous and Northern partnerships and responsible, science-based leadership. Of particular relevance to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the two leaders called on all Arctic nations, including those with Arctic interests, to embrace a new future for Arctic leadership with four objectives:

- **Conserve Arctic biodiversity** through science-based decision-making: Canada and the United States reaffirmed their national goals of protecting at least 17 per cent of land areas and 10 per cent of marine areas by 2020<sup>2</sup>, vowing to work directly with indigenous partners, state, territorial and provincial governments to establish a new conservation goal for the Arctic based on the best available climate science and knowledge.
- **Incorporate indigenous science and traditional knowledge into decision-making:** The two countries said they are committed to collaborating with indigenous peoples and Arctic governments, leaders and communities to more broadly and respectfully include indigenous science and traditional knowledge into decision-making, including environmental assessments, resource management, and advancing the understanding of climate change and how best to manage its effects.

<sup>1</sup> See *Note to editors*, Background: The Arctic, Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples.

<sup>2</sup> Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.



Convention on  
Biological Diversity

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity  
United Nations Environment Programme  
413 Saint-Jacques Street, Suite 800, Montreal, QC, H2Y 1N9, Canada  
Tel : +1 514 288 2220 Fax : +1 514 288 6588  
[secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int) [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int)



- **Build a sustainable Arctic economy:** Commercial activities, according to the two countries, will occur only when the “highest safety and environmental standards including national and global climate and environmental goals, and Indigenous rights and agreements” are met. They pledge to work together to develop, in 2016, a shared and science-based standard for considering the life cycle impacts of commercial activities in the Arctic and establish consistent policies for ships operating in the region. With a vision to ensure a future of “abundant Arctic fish”, both countries called for a binding international agreement to prevent unregulated fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean based on precautionary, science-based principles.
- **Supporting strong Arctic communities:** Canada and the United States commit to defining new approaches and exchanging best practices to strengthen the resilience of Northern and Arctic communities and to continue to support the well-being of Arctic residents while stressing the importance of respecting the rights and territory of indigenous peoples. Among other things, the two countries committed to working in partnership to implement land claims agreements to realize the social, cultural and economic potential of all indigenous and Northern communities.

This new partnership, which embraces Northern and indigenous communities and their local and traditional knowledge, together with science, for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and climate action, brings renewed hope for a world region which is experiencing accelerated climate change.

#### *Note to editors*

**U.S.-Canada Joint Statement on Climate, Energy and Arctic Leadership:** [www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/03/10/us-canada-joint-statement-climate-energy-and-arctic-leadership](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/03/10/us-canada-joint-statement-climate-energy-and-arctic-leadership)

#### **Background: The Arctic, Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples**

The IPCC<sup>3</sup> predicts that climate change will likely have a profound effect on humanity. Indigenous peoples and local communities are among the first to face the direct adverse consequences of climate change, due to their dependence upon and close relationship with the environment and its resources, including biodiversity. While climate change may still be a distant threat for some people, it is already a grim reality for many indigenous peoples and local communities, especially those in the Arctic region. Climate change brings additional vulnerabilities to indigenous and local communities, which can add to existing challenges, including political and economic marginalization, land and resource encroachments, human rights violations, discrimination, unemployment and substance abuse.<sup>4</sup>

**Paris Agreement on Climate Change:** <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/109r01.pdf>

**Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (2013):** [www.arcticbiodiversity.is/](http://www.arcticbiodiversity.is/)

#### **The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

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 196 Parties up to now, the Convention has near

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<sup>3</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: [www.ipcc.ch/](http://www.ipcc.ch/).

<sup>4</sup> Refer to: [www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=WG8J-05](http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=WG8J-05) – UNEP/CBD/WG8J/5/INF/18 – Report on Indigenous and Local Communities Highly Vulnerable to Climate Change Inter Alia of the Arctic, Small Island States and High Altitudes, with a Focus on Causes And Solutions.

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, the transfer of technologies and 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 and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing are supplementary agreements to the Convention. The Cartagena Protocol, which entered into force on 11 September 2003, seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 170 Parties have ratified the Cartagena Protocol. The Nagoya Protocol aims at sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources in a fair and equitable way, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies. It entered into force on 12 October 2014 and, to date, has been ratified by 72 Parties. For more information, visit: [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int). For additional information, please contact: David Ainsworth on +1 514 287 7025 or at [david.ainsworth@cbd.int](mailto:david.ainsworth@cbd.int); or Johan Hedlund on +1 514 287 6670 or at [johan.hedlund@cbd.int](mailto:johan.hedlund@cbd.int).

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