



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

TO

**THE OPEN-ENDED INTER-SESSIONAL MEETING ON THE
STRATEGIC PLAN, NATIONAL REPORTS, AND THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION**

Montreal, Canada, 19 – 21 November 2001

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I first welcome you all to this Open-ended Inter-Sessional Meeting on the Strategic Plan, National Reports and the Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

At the outset, I would like to express once again my gratitude to Denmark, the European Commission, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom for the financial contributions they made to enable the participation of so many developing countries and countries with economies in transition in this meeting and in last week's seventh meeting of SBSTTA.

Those of you who were here last week need no reminding of the encouraging progress made by that meeting of SBSTTA on several of the key issues facing the Convention, most notably, of course, forest biological diversity.

The meeting of SBSTTA was the third major intergovernmental event under the Convention in the last two months, following the second meeting of the ICCP in Nairobi in early October and the meeting of the Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing in Bonn at the end of the month. Each of those meetings dealt with a different subject matter, but they all had at least one thing in common: although the discussions were in many cases intense, they were marked by a spirit of compromise and a determination to find the best way forward to secure the objectives of the Convention.

The present meeting was called precisely to strengthen the underpinnings of the Convention process, to develop proposals to improve the institutional framework for the protection and sustainable use of the biodiversity of this planet. Its specific purpose, as set out in decision V/20, is to consider draft elements on the following topics for further consideration by Parties at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties:

- The preparation of the Strategic Plan for the Convention;
- The second national reports;
- Means to support implementation of the Convention, in particular, implementation of priority actions in national biodiversity strategies and action plans; and,
- The role of inter-sessional processes in enhancing the implementation of the Convention.

The need to enhance implementation has been clearly stated many times in the past. It is all the more important now as we approach the review of the implementation of Agenda 21 that will take place at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September next year. The Convention is the principal global instrument for achieving the goals set out in chapter 15 of Agenda 21, on conservation of biological diversity. But, as the Conference of the Parties has recognized, biological diversity is in itself a cross-cutting issue and of relevance to many of the issues related to sustainable development.

Mr. President,

Much has already been achieved under the Convention. To take as an example the three recent major meetings to which I have just referred, the emerging consensus on issues such as biosafety, access and benefit-sharing and forest biological diversity would have been frankly unthinkable ten years ago.

Despite these achievements, biodiversity is being destroyed at an unprecedented rate. The challenge this week is to find ways to improve the functioning of the Convention process, to give it a long-term focus through a Strategic Plan, to consider experience gained through the national reporting procedure, and to look at ways to support implementation, particularly ways to ensure that priorities identified at the national level are fully and expeditiously addressed within the framework of the Convention.

Mr. President,

With regard to the specific items on your agenda, let me first turn to the Strategic Plan. The basic framework of the draft Strategic Plan in the documentation before you comes from section II of decision V/20. Here, the Conference of the Parties decided that the Strategic Plan should initially cover the period 2002-2010; that it should contain a set of operational goals and that, within each of the goals, the Strategic Plan should identify as far as possible the planned activities, expected products, timing of each of these activities and products, actors, mechanisms to realize the goals, financial and human resource requirements. The Conference of the Parties also requested

that the views of the subsidiary bodies of the Convention be considered on matters relevant to their mandates.

Based on the views received from Governments and organizations, as well as informal discussions on the subject, the Secretariat prepared a draft Strategic Plan. A Workshop on the Strategic Plan was held in the Seychelles at the end of May. The conclusions of that Workshop were distributed to Parties and have been made available at all intergovernmental meetings since that time and the bodies concerned, such as the ICCP, the Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing, and SBSTTA, have been asked for their views as the draft relates to their work.

The conclusions of the Seychelles Workshop form the basis of the draft currently before you. As agreed at the Seychelles Workshop, the draft contains the following basic elements:

- A mission statement
- A vision
- Operational goals
- Action plans to achieve the operational goals
- Monitoring, reporting, assessment and review, and communication

The rationale for these elements is further explained in section III of document UNEP/CBD/MSP/2, which is the main paper for discussion under this item. The Secretariat is also circulating information document UNEP/CBD/MSP/INF/1, which contains a glossary of the main terms used in the draft. I hope that these documents will serve as a useful starting point for your discussions.

Mr. President,

The next item on the agenda is national reports. Periodic national reporting is a requirement for all Parties under Article 26 of the Convention. At its fifth meeting, the Conference of the Parties endorsed a standard format for the second and future national reports, which had been prepared on the basis of the experience of the first round of reporting and is designed to simplify the reporting process, in terms of both completion of reports by Governments and their consideration by the Conference of the Parties. Document UNEP/CBD/MSP/3 considers the experience with the new reporting format in light of the reports received to date. It also provides a proposal for linking the reporting and review of implementation of the Strategic Plan to the existing schedule for national reporting for the period 2002-2010. Finally, it provides an overview of recent developments concerning the question of harmonization of national reporting under different environmental conventions. The latter issue is elaborated upon in information document 2, which contains a background paper on the subject prepared by UNEP for the recent third meeting of the Environmental Management Group.

Mr. President,

The third substantive item on your agenda concerns the implementation of the Convention, in particular, implementation of priority actions in national biodiversity strategies and action plans. Under this item, you are invited to consider current levels of support for implementation of these strategies and action plans and the means to identify and support priority actions. In particular, there is a need for advice on how to ensure

that available or potential support from various sources is channelled towards these priority actions in a coordinated and effective manner.

Mr. President,

Finally, your agenda contains one item that was not specifically mentioned in paragraph 38 of decision V/20, namely item 6, “Operations of the Convention”. It is included because it is a common thread that runs through the other three items on the agenda and, indeed, a central feature of the overall purpose of the meeting. The topic is on the provisional agenda for the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, included together with the Strategic Plan and national reporting under item 24 of COP-6. The documentation before you reviews the operations of the Convention, including such aspects as implementation of decisions, the usefulness of the recommendations of SBSTTA, and the role of the inter-sessional process in enhancing implementation. Again, under this item, the Secretariat is presenting a number of elements for your consideration in developing a recommendation for the Conference of the Parties.

Mr. President,

The tasks before you have been clearly defined by the Conference of the Parties, namely, to lay the groundwork for the consideration by the Conference of the Parties of the Strategic Plan, national reporting and operations of the Convention. I hope that the draft elements for decisions prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the Bureau will facilitate your work. I hope that you can build upon them over the next three days and come up with proposals that will reflect a consensus among all Parties on the

future direction that our Convention is to take. By doing so, you will not only expedite the work of the Conference of the Parties, you will also send a clear signal to the preparatory process for the World Summit that our Convention has the vitality and dynamism necessary to address the challenges of achieving sustainable development.

Mr. President,

I wish to note that copies of the Handbook of the Convention as well as the Global Biodiversity Outlook are available to this meeting.

In closing I wish you every success in your work and assure you that, as always, you can count on the Secretariat for all the support you need as you go about your business over the next few days.

I thank you for your attention.