



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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STATEMENT BY

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

TO

**THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC,
TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE (SBSTTA-8)**

Montreal, Canada, 10 - 14 March 2003

**Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Montreal once again for this eighth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice.

At the outset, I would like to thank those countries that have generously contributed funds to enable the participation of representatives from developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Those countries are Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me first to brief you on a number of major developments that have taken place since you last met, in November 2001.

Last year witnessed an unprecedented accumulation of political support for the Convention process, first through the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and The Hague Ministerial Declaration and then at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Never before has so much prominence been given to biodiversity issues and the inextricable link between its conservation and the achievement of sustainable development.

The Plan of Implementation adopted by the World Summit represents an unambiguous endorsement of the Convention process and of the need for action at all levels to achieve a significant reduction in the loss of biodiversity by 2010. This is the target first set by the Conference of the Parties and endorsed by the World Summit and the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The increasing interest in the Convention was clearly manifested by the high level of attendance at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, held in The Hague last April. Some 130 Ministers drafted and signed the comprehensive Ministerial Declaration, which also fed into the preparations of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. During the meeting, more than 30 major decisions were adopted.

Of those decisions, the adoption of the Bonn Guidelines on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-Sharing paves the way for a more equitable and balanced implementation of the Convention and the building of equal partnerships in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity resources – the principles that should underlie each and every aspect of our work. An action plan for capacity-building in this area has also been agreed.

The Conference of the Parties also adopted an expanded work programme on forests. In its Plan of Implementation, the World Summit called for action to implement this expanded programme in close cooperation with the United Nations Forum on Forests, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other forest-related processes and conventions, with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders.

The adoption of this programme in many ways foreshadows the next phase of the Convention process. The initial programmes of work have been put into practice as far as possible, and the lessons learned are now being used to refine them. This is the process that you have been asked to follow this week when you undertake the in-depth review of the work programmes on inland waters and on marine and coastal biodiversity.

From an administrative point of view, the Conference of the Parties approved new Professional posts in the Secretariat for a number of programme areas of relevance to SBSTTA, including protected areas, alien

invasive species, the Global Taxonomy Initiative and *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation.

Back-to-back with the Conference of the Parties was the third and final meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. As of today, 44 Parties have ratified or acceded to the Protocol, and a further seven will have to do so for it to enter into force. The first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol will therefore, we hope, be held in conjunction with the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention next year in Malaysia.

Mr. Chairman,

The Strategic Plan adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its sixth meeting provides a strong framework for focused action for the next eight years. I would encourage you to keep the Plan in mind throughout your deliberations at this meeting and ensure that its strategic goals are being addressed in the recommendations that you make. The Inter-Sessional Meeting on the Multi-Year Programme of Work for the Convention, which will be held here next week, will discuss proposed evaluation mechanisms for the implementation of the Strategic Plan. Your input to this discussion and on the elements to be included in the multi-year programme of work will be most useful.

At the same time, the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation—the first text adopted under the Convention to include specific outcome-oriented targets—is of special significance in this respect. Although the Strategy relates specifically to plants, it can in future be easily adapted to the other key components of biodiversity.

The Conference of the Parties requested this body to take the targets in the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation into consideration in its periodic reviews of the thematic and cross-cutting programmes of work and to develop ways and means for promoting the implementation of the Strategy, and for monitoring and assessing progress. It is therefore important to keep this in mind in your work this week.

Mr. Chairman,

Turning to the agenda for this meeting, the items are, as is customary, arranged under a number of headings, namely:

- **First, *reports*, including progress in the implementation of the programmes of work and the inter-sessional activities of the Bureau;**
- **Second, *main theme*, which for this meeting is mountain ecosystems;**
- **Third, *in-depth reviews*, including the reviews of the programmes of work on inland waters and marine and coastal biodiversity; and**
- **Fourth, *other substantive issues*, which include matters relating to dry and sub-humid lands biodiversity, biological diversity and tourism and the operations of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice.**

In addressing the main theme, mountain biodiversity, it is hoped that you can build on the momentum generated last year—the International Year of Mountains. At the same time, the World Summit called for action to develop and implement programmes of work to address, *inter alia*, loss of biodiversity in mountains. Your work this week can therefore be seen as a direct response to the Plan of Implementation adopted by the World Summit.

Mountains are key ecosystems for a number of reasons. They are among the world's greatest sources of biodiversity due to the inherent

ecological variability over short distances. They also are a source of food, water and fuel for millions of people, including those living far away downstream. And they are particularly fragile, and thus vulnerable to damage by unsustainable practices and global climatic changes.

As in the past, the Secretariat has prepared a number of documents to assist you in your deliberations and a keynote speaker has been invited to give a detailed overview of the theme.

The Secretariat, with the assistance of a number of partners, has also attempted to provide you with the tools necessary for the in-depth reviews of the programmes of work on inland waters and marine and coastal biodiversity. The documentation before you provides information on status and trends, progress in implementation of the programmes of work and recommendations for future work.

The programme of work on dry and sub-humid lands will be the subject of in-depth review in 2006. At this meeting, SBSTTA is being requested to address a number of matters arising from past decisions of the Conference of the Parties. These matters essentially involve the assessment of the status and trends of dryland biodiversity, the further refinement of the programme of work and the coordination of relevant activities.

With regard to biological diversity and tourism, you have before you the draft guidelines for activities related to sustainable tourism development and biological diversity in vulnerable ecosystems as revised in the light of the comments received on the initial draft and the outcome of the World Ecotourism Summit.

Mr. Chairman,

The final substantive item on your agenda—operations of SBSTTA—has three interrelated sub-items:

- **Strategic plan of SBSTTA;**
- **Assessment of recommendations made to the Conference of the Parties by SBSTTA; and**
- **Multi-year programme of work of the Conference of the Parties up to 2010.**

Of this cluster, let me focus briefly on the assessment of recommendations made by this body to the Conference of the Parties. The purpose of this assessment, which is being undertaken at the request of the Conference of the Parties, is to determine the extent to which the advice provided by SBSTTA is consistent with the requirements of the Conference of the Parties and facilitates scientifically sound policy-making by that body. Accordingly, the Secretariat undertook a detailed review of the rate of adoption of SBSTTA recommendations by the Conference of the Parties. It was found that, on average, 90 per cent of all SBSTTA recommendations have been subsequently taken on board by the Conference of the Parties. It was not absolutely clear, however, what really determined whether or not a recommendation was adopted, although some possibilities are mentioned in the documentation before you.

Overall, it can be said that SBSTTA has been providing sound advice to the Conference of the Parties. However, we sense there are problems in implementation. It was beyond our scope to fully establish the status of implementation, but members of the bureaux of both SBSTTA and the Conference of the Parties did point to some impediments faced by Parties, such as:

- **Inadequate financial and human resources (in both developed and developing countries);**
- **Difficulties in meeting the deadlines set;**

- **Constraints encountered when implementing politically sensitive recommendations.**

I hope that you will find the review useful and that it will facilitate your efforts to improve the guidance given to the Conference of the Parties as we approach a critical phase of implementation. Likewise, your discussions on the two other items in the cluster—the strategic plan for SBSTTA and the multi-year programme of work—should serve to give clarity and focus to our future work so that we can realize the full potential of the Convention as a vehicle for sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

In those discussions—as in the rest of your work—you can count upon the full support of the Secretariat.

I thank you for your attention and wish you success in your work.