



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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OPENING REMARKS BY
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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
TO
THE TENTH MEETING OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC,
TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE
Bangkok, Thailand, 7-11 February 2005

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to this tenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice. May I first take this opportunity to thank the Government and the people of Thailand for their generosity in hosting this meeting and for their warm hospitality, particularly in light of the shocking tragedy that struck their country and others of the region toward the end of last year. I would like to extend my deepest sympathy to all the victims of this catastrophe, in Thailand and in the other affected countries of the Indian Ocean region.

As other speakers have noted, this recent tsunami reminds us of our essential fragility against the forces of nature. It also reinforces the need to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity, both as a guard against disasters and as a means of ensuring ecosystem resilience to mitigate their effects.

Mr. Chairman,

As on previous occasions, the level of attendance at this meeting is possible only as a result of the generosity of those countries that have contributed to enable the participation of delegates from developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition. These countries are Austria, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the host country, Thailand. As I have said in the past, these voluntary contributions are essential for obtaining the broad geographical range of expertise necessary to

ensure the quality and representativity of the advice given to the Conference of the Parties. They are much appreciated.

I would also like to express my deep gratitude to all those who have given their time and effort to the various inter-sessional processes in preparation for this meeting, as well as those countries and organizations that have supported them. These processes, such as liaison groups, ad hoc technical expert groups and expert meetings, help gather the best possible scientific information and thus lay the groundwork for your deliberations. As such, they are an important ingredient for the success of our work.

Mr. Chairman,

As this is the first time that SBSTTA is meeting since the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, I would like to recall some of the main outcomes of that meeting.

The Conference of the Parties adopted three new programmes of work, on, respectively, protected areas, transfer of technology and cooperation, and mountain biodiversity. It reviewed and expanded the existing programmes of work on the biodiversity of inland water ecosystems and marine and coastal areas and requested SBSTTA to develop outcome-oriented targets for their implementation. It also adopted a multi-year programme of work with a focus on implementation and review of progress, which will guide the work of SBSTTA and other Convention bodies in the coming years. It also developed a framework to assess the effectiveness of the Convention process in achieving the 2010 target contained in the Strategic Plan of the Convention and endorsed in Johannesburg

in 2002. This framework includes seven focal areas for which specific goals and targets have been established, including indicators that have been identified and are ready for testing to measure progress in attaining those targets. These indicators are to be reviewed and further developed at the present meeting.

On other issues, the Conference of the Parties responded to the call of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and agreed on a process for the negotiation of an international regime for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. The first meeting under that process will be held here in Bangkok next week. The seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties also saw further progress towards the sustainable use of biodiversity with the adoption of the Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines on the subject.

Finally, the Conference of the Parties considered the status of implementation of the Convention and decided to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the Convention processes – including SBSTTA- in meeting the 2010 target. It also adopted decisions on all of the ongoing thematic and cross-cutting programmes of work, including a number of important decisions to advance the programme of work on Article 8(j), and the mechanisms for implementation of the Convention, namely, the financial mechanism and resources, national reporting, including guidelines for the third national reports, the clearing-house mechanism, and communication, education and public awareness.

Mr. Chairman,

The outcome of the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties was extremely fruitful and promises well for the future implementation of the Convention in all its aspects. It does, however, mean more work for this body, and this is reflected in the heavy agenda before you.

The substantive items on this agenda are grouped into three categories. The first is the new thematic area of island biodiversity. The second comprises a number of strategic issues for evaluating progress in the implementation of the Strategic Plan, including the 2010 target, and contributions to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The third includes other scientific and technical aspects referred to SBSTTA by the Conference of the Parties.

Mr. Chairman,

With regard to island biodiversity, it has long been recognized that islands comprise unique ecosystems. They contain high numbers of endemic species and particular habitat types. At the same time, they are highly vulnerable to the impacts of both natural hazards and human pressure. The effects of depletion of freshwater supplies, over-fishing, uncontrolled tourism, introduction of invasive alien species, and climate change are particularly intense on islands and bear upon people's livelihoods much more extremely than on the mainland. With the generous support of the Government of Spain, an Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group met in December and drafted a proposed programme of work. In doing so, the Group was guided by the Strategic Plan of the Convention, the Plan of

Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and the Millennium Development Goals. The draft programme includes global outcome- and process-oriented targets and indicators pertaining to the priority actions in it as well as concrete ways to link these actions with other relevant initiatives.

Subsequently, a number of members of the AHTEG met in conjunction with the Mauritius International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and elaborated some suggestions as to how to refine the draft programme in the light of the outcome of that Meeting. These suggestions and the draft programme as a whole were further considered by a liaison group last Saturday, and the results are before you for your consideration.

Mr. Chairman,

You will recall that, at its seventh meeting, the Conference of the Parties decided to evaluate progress in the implementation of the 2010 biodiversity target, promote the integration of goals and sub-targets in thematic work programmes, review the effectiveness of the Convention process—including SBSTTA—and the use of the Global Biodiversity Outlook for communicating progress in implementing the 2010 target and the current status of biodiversity. It also decided that the development of outcome-oriented targets is a key priority for SBSTTA.

To this end, this week you will have before you the inputs from a number of expert meetings held in the latter half of last year, on outcome-oriented targets for the programmes of work on inland water ecosystems and marine and coastal

ecosystems, on review and identification of indicators for assessing progress towards the 2010 target, and on review of the outline for the second Global Biodiversity Outlook. The proposals before you build on the outcome of these various meetings. You will also have for your consideration a series of proposed activities to make full use of the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention in promoting technical cooperation and information exchange for achieving the 2010 biodiversity target. The Informal Advisory Committee of the Clearing-house Mechanism met yesterday and provided valuable advice in this regard.

In addition, you are being requested to review the Operational Plan of SBSTTA, methods and modalities for pilot assessments, as well as the draft reports of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. In this connection, you may wish to take into consideration the proceedings and outcomes of the recent major International Conference on “Biodiversity: Science and Governance”, held in Paris last month at the initiative of Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic. In particular, Mr. Chirac himself suggested that there was a need for an intergovernmental group on changes to biodiversity, with a role similar to that of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This suggestion was echoed in the Paris declaration on Biodiversity emanating from the Conference. I believe the delegation of France at this meeting will be able to enlighten us further on the details of this proposal.

Mr. Chairman:

The third category of items before you—other scientific aspects—relate to:

- Incentive measures.

- Agricultural biodiversity
- Global Taxonomy Initiative; and
- Climate change.

All these issues have been addressed by this body in the past. They have all been the subject of in-depth work by expert bodies, the results of which are in the documentation before you.

With regard to incentive measures, the task before this meeting is to further refine the proposals for the application of ways and means to remove or mitigate perverse incentives, which have already been the subject of extensive discussions within both SBSTTA and the Conference of the Parties—and to transmit your recommendations for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its meeting next year.

The second issue under this item relates to agricultural biodiversity. While all the thematic programmes of work have important connections to the Millennium Development Goals, that on agricultural biodiversity is of particular importance since its implementation directly concerns issues such as agricultural sustainability, food security and actions to combat hunger. Hence, at its seventh meeting, following its examination of the relationship between the Convention and the Millennium Development Goals, the Conference of the Parties called for the development of options for a cross-cutting initiative on biodiversity for food and nutrition. Following wide consultation, some possible options have been

developed and are before you for your consideration and refinement before submission to the Conference of the Parties.

Also before you is a proposed framework for the implementation of the International Soil Biodiversity Initiative, as an integral part of the programme of work on agricultural biodiversity. This framework builds upon previous work by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and I would commend it to your attention.

The third and last matter related to agricultural biodiversity is the provision of advice, as requested by the Conference of the Parties, regarding the report of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Genetic Use Restriction Technologies. This is a matter on which a number of Parties and representatives of indigenous and local communities have called for urgent action, and your due consideration and advice to the Conference of the Parties on the report would be much appreciated.

Mr. Chairman,

The programme of work for the Global Taxonomy Initiative was developed in recognition of the importance of taxonomic competence for achieving the goals of the Convention, and for facilitating the implementation of its various programmes of work. It will be reviewed in depth next year by the Conference of the Parties. Your initial recommendations on how to carry out the review process will guide this same body at its eleventh meeting to assess the achievements in implementing the programme of work before the Conference of the Parties meets next year. Your views on the outline of the guide to the Global Taxonomy

Initiative, which aims at providing practical advice on project development and implementation, would also be most welcome.

The final issue under the heading “other scientific and technical aspects” is biological diversity and climate change. Here, you are invited to consider the proposed terms of reference for an ad hoc technical expert group to develop draft practical guidance for including biodiversity considerations into climate change adaptation and mitigation activities, and land degradation and desertification. This is an important subject, not only because of its intrinsic merits but also because such work serves to promote further cooperation and synergies between the Rio conventions and other environment-related bodies at the national, regional and international levels.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me conclude by once more extending my sincere appreciation to the Government of Thailand for hosting this meeting. The venue for our meeting could not be more appropriate: Thailand is globally known for its rich biodiversity and, even before becoming a Party, has been a staunch supporter of the Convention since its adoption. Thailand also served as a host, between last October and November, to the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and the third IUCN World Conservation Congress. May I take this opportunity to congratulate its Government for their current efforts and their obvious commitment to biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use.

Finally I want to thank the members of the Bureau of SBSTTA for their contributions to the review and finalization of the agenda for this meeting. Their unstinting support is essential for the effectiveness of the work of this body. I thank you for your attention and wish you a successful meeting.