



Achieving the
2010
Biodiversity
Target

Secretariat of the
Convention on Biological Diversity



CBD

STATEMENT BY

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**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

AT THE

**OPENING SESSION OF THE
BRAINSTORMING MEETING ON SOUTH-SOUTH
COOPERATION ON BIODIVERSITY**

MONTREAL

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Solidarity and unity are key features of the functioning of the Group of 77 and China as a institution that, since its establishment in 1964, has made a unique contribution to promoting multilateral cooperation for development. As such, the Group of 77 has always attached the highest importance to the promotion of South-South cooperation as a means for the exchange of experience and the dissemination of best practices among its members. The overwhelming majority of the biodiversity of our planet is located in developing countries. Often, the countries poorest in financial resources are the richest in terms of biodiversity. However, this wealth is disappearing at a frightening pace, undermining the potential for sustained growth in developing countries. Promoting South-South cooperation for protecting the wealth of resources of developing countries is an idea whose time has come.

I would like therefore to pay tribute to HE Ambassador Dumisani S. Kumalo, the Chairman of the Group of 77 for his initiative aimed at promoting a multi-year plan of action for the implementation of the threefold objective of the Convention on Biological Diversity. This initiative coming from the representative of the third most biologically diverse country in the world is of high significance. South Africa occupies only 2% of the world's surface but is the home to nearly 10% of its plants and 7% of its reptiles, birds and mammals with a high level of endemism.

South Africa has taken a long journey to achieve unity in diversity. This rainbow nation establishes in its constitution that: "Everyone has the right to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations." The recently adopted Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan will contribute to translating this constitutional right into reality. The integration of biodiversity into sectoral plans such as agriculture, forestry, mining and urban development is a key action identified in this major tool for the implementation of the objectives of the Convention and was developed through a two-year participatory process. Nine priority geographical areas have been identified including priorities for freshwater, estuarine and marine ecosystems. South Africa plans to designate 20% of its coastline as marine protected areas by 2010. South Africa's experience in implementing the objectives of the Convention will greatly benefit other African countries in the context of the environmental dimension of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. It will also benefit its partners in Latin America and Asia.

This initiative is taking place while the Convention on Biological Diversity is entering a new and exciting phase of enhanced implementation of its threefold objectives under the leadership of one the richest countries in terms of biological diversity and a founding member of the Group of 77, a country that has always played a leading role in promoting multilateral cooperation for international development and world peace. Indeed, under the able leadership of HE Marina Silva, the President of the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, a new era of the Convention was inaugurated in Curitiba in March this year

This initiative is also taking place at the time of enhanced collaboration between China, Africa and the Arab world as evidenced by last week's historic summit. China, a member of the Group of 77, has indeed a lot to offer to the other members of the Group and, in particular, African countries in terms of experience and lessons learned

I would like to pay tribute also to the President of AMCEN, Minister Djombo, for his unique contribution in promoting the Environmental Action Plan of NEPAD which includes forests and biodiversity. I would like also to congratulate him for promoting the South-South initiative among the Congo basin, the Amazon Basin and ASEAN. I would like also to pay tribute to Mr. Mourad Ahmia, the Executive Secretary of the Group of 77 for the exemplary spirit of cooperation and partnership that he has demonstrated throughout the preparation of this meeting. I would like also to thank UNEP and UNDP for joining force in responding to this initiative of the Group of 77 and China. I would like also to pay vibrant tribute to the Government of Netherlands for providing the financial resources which make this historical brainstorming meeting a reality.

At the World Summit for Sustainable Development, President Thebo Mbeki reminded the international community of "the obligation we all face to respond with all seriousness and with a sense of urgency in the interests of all humanity and our common planet". I have no doubt that, in considering the suggested action plan on South-South cooperation, the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Bonn in May 2008 will act with the same sense of responsibility and urgency. The participation this morning with us of Mr. Jochen Flasbarth, is a clear testimony of the importance attached to this unique initiative by the host of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

I thank you for your kind attention.