



CBD

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Biodiversity and Climate Change

STATEMENT

by

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OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY**

at the

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“GLOBALIZATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT AT
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduced in the early years of the European settlement as a stock for the fur industry, the Brushtail Possum has become today a major environmental, economic and cultural threat to New Zealand. At the kind invitation of the Honorable Winston Peter, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, I had the honour to pay an official visit to New Zealand last week.

I have seen the dramatic impact of alien species on the unique terrestrial and marine ecosystems of the 700 islands that make up New Zealand. Every night, possums, whose numbers are now estimated to be 70 million, eat 22,000 tonnes of vegetation, mostly indigenous and endemic as a result 7.3 million of tones of vegetation are being lost annually. Possums infest 95% of the land area of New Zealand and are causing major changes to the composition of the country's forests. They are also contributing to a widespread decline and even extinction of indigenous and endemic vegetation, most of which is part of the cultural heritage of the Maori people.

To combat possums, stoats were introduced. Instead of eating possums, stoats prefer bird eggs, thus threatening birds including the Kiwi, the icon bird of New Zealand. To combat possums, New Zealand imports every year 2.7 million tonnes of a poison known as sodium monofluoroacetate (compound 1080). Every year, New Zealand imports 80% of the world production of compound 1080 produced by a single United States company. The Department of Conservation spends every year 60 millions dollars for pest control, mainly through aerial spraying.

The use of compound 1080 is also contributing to loss of bird species. Possums are also a reservoir of bovine tuberculosis. They therefore represent a major threat to New Zealand's economy and in particular the dairy sector. The agriculture sector contributes 52% of the value of New Zealand exports. Sixty million dollars are spent by the health ministry to combat TB. Marine invaders are also a major threat to the uniqueness of the marine environment of New Zealand comprising 15,000 species and another estimated 50,000 species to be described. Every fortnight, seven new marine species are discovered in New Zealand, which harbours 10% of the world marine biodiversity. Recently introduced through human-assisted fishing equipment from Northern Europe, an algae named *Didymosphenia geminata*, or "Didymo", is threatening not only the marine biodiversity of New Zealand but also its vibrant tourism sector. Declared as an unwanted organism under the New Zealand Biosecurity Act, Didymo can form massive blooms and look similar to tissue paper. It affects stream habitats and destroys plants and food for fish.

Here in Kenya, another alien species is seriously affecting the unique biodiversity of Lake Victoria and the livelihood of local community. Lake Victoria's ecological and natural resource base has been dramatically altered through water hyacinth infestation as well as the introduction of the Nile Perch. In the mid-1990s, water hyacinth invaded more than 12,000 hectares of the lake and affected the livelihood of around 40 million people. It impedes electricity production, irrigation, navigation and fisheries activities. Moreover it enhances water losses through evaporation and facilitates the proliferation of diseases. Its cost is estimated to be US\$ 71 million in seven African countries. One

study for the United States of America estimates costs of US\$ 137 billion per year from an array of invasive species.

A South America native, water hyacinth is now found in more than 50 countries in five continents. It is estimated that 480,000 alien species have been introduced into the varied ecosystems of our planet. Since the 17th century, invasive alien species have contributed to nearly 40% of all known animal extinctions.

The Convention on Biological Diversity has since its inception identified alien species as one of the main causes of biodiversity loss. The Convention requires Parties to prevent the introduction of, or to control or eradicate, those alien species that threaten ecosystems, habitats or species. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment confirmed that alien species are a major cause of the unprecedented loss of biodiversity that has been taking place over the last fifty years.

A meeting of experts held in 2005 under the auspices of the Convention identified civil air transport as one of the pathway where further efforts are needed to minimize risks associated with invasive alien species. Subsequently, this issue was addressed by the eight meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held in Curitiba, Brazil, in March 2006.

Since 1945, the world economy has grown sixfold as a result of globalization generated by the unprecedented transboundary movement of people, commodities, money, and information. Increased travel, trade and tourism associated with globalization and expansion of the human population have, however, facilitated intentional and unintentional movement of species beyond natural biogeographical barriers and many of these species have become harmful to native ecosystems.

Civil air transport is one important pathway by which species are moved beyond natural barriers. According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the number of airline passengers will hit another record this year. It was estimated at 2.2 billion people last year. The traffic of freight by air reached the record of 39 million tonnes. Movement of both passengers and freight by civil aircraft is expected to increase by more than 5% annually through 2009. Marine alien species are introduced by ships' hulls or in ballast water. Last year, the shipping industry recorded 116 million containers and 25% were transported in the area between China, Japan, Indonesia and the Republic of Korea. The six largest container harbours in the world are located in Asia, one of the most megabiodiverse continents of our planet.

The Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization, in adopting its resolution A35-19, called on its members to support one another's efforts to reduce the risks of introducing potentially invasive alien species through civil air transport and requested its Council to develop guidance material and standards and recommended practices. Pursuant to the last decision of the Conference of the Parties, the Convention Secretariat has initiated a dialogue with ICAO with a view of enhancing inter-agency collaboration and coordination among relevant national institutions. Many Governments have taken measures to address particular species. Mauritius, for example, has adopted stringent measures to prevent introduction of a sugar cane pest—a beetle known as the white grub or *ver blanc*—that is indigenous to Madagascar. Flight departure times have been changed as the beetle actively flies around at dusk and is attracted to light.

The Parties have also identifies tourism as a particular pathway for invasive alien species. With 842 million arrivals and a 4.5% growth rate, 2006 exceeded expectations as the tourism sector registered a new record for the industry. 1.1 billion of arrivals are expected in 2010 and 1.6 billions in 2020. The Convention Secretariat is working actively with the World Tourism Organization to promote inter-agency collaboration for the implementation of the Convention's work programme on tourism and development.

CO2 emissions of international air travel have increased by 73% from 1990 to 2003. Estimates suggest that climate change trends will continue and have considerable impacts on biodiversity, owing to the interactions with habitat destruction and alteration. Some scenarios are indicating that as many as 30% of species will be lost as a consequence of climate change. Here in Kenya, climate change has caused the level of Lake Victoria to drop by about 30%, and the recently released fourth IPCC assessment has confirmed that the snow on Mount Kenya as well as Mount Kilimanjaro and Ruwenzori mountains may disappear very soon. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment confirmed that climate change has been identified as a second root cause of loss of biodiversity. It also concluded that the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target is achievable but required unprecedented efforts at the local, national and international levels.

In Curitiba, in March last year the 4,000 participants attending the eight meeting of the Conference of the Parties responded to this call for urgent action. A new era was born, which translates the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity into reality through an enhanced phase of implementation. In May 2008, Germany will host the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which will take place two years before the deadline agreed in Johannesburg by 110 Heads of State and Government to reduce significantly the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010. In December last year, it initiated through the Potsdam process a series of actions aimed at making the Bonn biodiversity meetings a watershed moment in the life of the Convention.

Japan also decided to respond to this call for urgent action by offering to host the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Nagoya in 2010. Responding to this call for urgent action is our individual and collective responsibility. The report of IPCC issued last week is crystal clear. The status quo and business-as-usual scenarios are no longer an option. We need to act now, urgently and decisively. We owe it to ourselves and we owe it to our children.

Thank you for your kind attention.
