



CBD

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Biodiversity and Climate Change

Statement

Delivered by
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Ladies and gentlemen,

In April 2002, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) committed themselves to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national levels as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth. This target was subsequently endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the United Nations General Assembly, highlighting the crucial role of biodiversity in human well-being. Established under the leadership of the Heads of States of the European Union, this bold initiative remains the most ambitious target for halting the rate of biodiversity loss.

I would like to congratulate the partners grouped under Countdown 2010 for assisting governments worldwide in the difficult and colossal task of moving closer to this 2010 Biodiversity Target. The Secretariat of the Convention is proud to count on partners such as Countdown 2010 and I am delighted that the partnership between the CBD and Countdown 2010 will soon be strengthened through a Memorandum of Understanding.

Achieving the 2010 Target presents a truly global challenge to which actors around the globe respond differently, according to their capacities and priorities. But all Parties to the Convention have committed to achieving the Target. Since its adoption, most countries have established specific national targets within the flexible framework adopted under the Convention. The third national reports provide details for each sub-target in the framework and give information on the national indicators developed by countries according to national priorities and capacities, and taking into account differences in biodiversity.

The actions of individual countries, organizations and local contributions, such as the success stories that we have heard about, together, make the response to biodiversity loss bigger than the sum of its part. Synergies between all these actions and coherence with other global commitments are crucial for sustainable development.



In 2006 at the initiative of former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, the 2010 Biodiversity Target was incorporated as a new target of the Millennium Development Goals under Goal 7 to "ensure environmental sustainability" in the *Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization* presented at the 61st session of the General Assembly.

The incorporation of the 2010 Biodiversity Target into our economic activities and the economic benefits from biodiversity need to be better reflected at the national and global levels. The meeting of environment ministers of the G8+5 held in Potsdam, Germany from 15 to 17 March 2007, led to support by all participants of the Potsdam Initiative – Biological Diversity 2010. The ministers agreed to the need for an analysis of the global economic benefits of biological diversity, the costs of biodiversity loss and the failure to take protective measures versus the costs of effective conservation. They also renewed their commitment to develop and implement national targets and strategies in order to achieve the 2010 Biodiversity Target and beyond.

Subsequently in an historic declaration, just a few days ago on 7 June, the Heads of State and Government of the G8, for the first time in the history of the G8 Summit, have explicitly recognized the importance of biodiversity as an indispensable basis for the provision of vital ecosystem services and the long term provision of natural resources for the global economy and committed to increase their efforts for the protection and sustainable use of biological diversity to achieve their agreed goal of significantly reducing the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010.

The coherence in the way we measure the achievement of the Target is very important for the synergies and success of global action. The 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership brings together numerous organizations and agencies, including Countdown 2010 and the CBD, to work on indicators to monitor and evaluate progress toward the 2010 target. These outputs will enable the identification of trends in the global loss of biodiversity, help a broad range of users to understand biodiversity loss, and play an important role in enabling the 2010 target to be met at national, regional, and global levels.

Despite of all these actions, commitments and international agreements, the big question remains: will the target be met? As we have heard from the success stories earlier and from national reporting through the Convention, significant achievements have been made towards this goal. Two of the response indicators used in the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook published last year show positive trends: 1) Protected area coverage has doubled over the past 20 years and terrestrial protected areas now cover over 12% of the Earth's land surface; 2) Water quality of the rivers in Europe, North America, and Latin America and the Caribbean has improved since the 1980s.

However, these remain local achievements. According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, unprecedented additional efforts would be needed to achieve, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss at all levels. Indeed, out of the 24 ecosystems services assessed by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 15 are in

decline, including the provision of freshwater, the ability of the atmosphere to cleanse itself from pollutants and the number and quality of places of spiritual and religious value. The extinction of animal and plant species is now occurring at between one hundred and one thousand times higher than the natural rate. Climate change is exacerbating biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystems already weakened by other drivers of change such as pollution, land-use change, invasive species and over-exploitation. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, approximately 20 to 30% of plant and animal species assessed so far are likely to be at increased risk of extinction if increases in global average temperature exceed 1.5-2.5°C.

The magnitude of the challenge of slowing the rate of biodiversity loss is demonstrated by the fact that most of the direct drivers of biodiversity loss are projected to either remain constant or to increase in the near future. Moreover, inertia in institutional systems results in time lags—years, decades, or even centuries—between actions taken and their impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems. Several of the 2010 biodiversity sub-targets adopted by the CBD could be met for some components of biodiversity. For example, the overall rate of habitat loss, which is the main driver of species loss in terrestrial ecosystems, is now slowing in certain regions such as temperate forests. This may not necessarily translate, however, into lower rates of species loss for all taxa because of the nature of the relationship between numbers of species and area of habitat, because decades or centuries may pass before species extinctions reach equilibrium with habitat loss, and because other drivers of loss, such as climate change, nutrient loading, and invasive species, are projected to increase. While rates of habitat loss are decreasing in temperate areas, they are projected to continue to increase in tropical areas.

The vision for 2010 and beyond, therefore has to take into account the fact that the global target will not be achieved on a global scale. There is no doubt that the ongoing debate on the need to reduce, and eventually halt biodiversity loss and our ability to assess the effectiveness of actions undertaken in this regard, have already made a significant impact on decision-making and implementation of biodiversity related activities.

The second Global Biodiversity Outlook suggests that the policies developed under the Convention are sufficient to meet the 2010 Biodiversity Target. However, they must be widely applied - in all relevant sectors - if conservation and sustainable use are to be achieved.

For example, the food and agriculture sector contributes to pressure on biodiversity through land-use change, nutrient loading and over-exploitation of wild resources. A mixture of planning, regulations and incentive measures should be implemented to improve agricultural efficiency, to plan more effectively for the expansion of agriculture, to moderate the demand for meat by the more affluent sectors of society and to halt over-fishing and other destructive fishing practices.

Trade policies have a strong affect on economic development, including on food and agricultural production. For this reason, biodiversity concerns should be integrated within the trade agenda. Proactive measures to protect biodiversity must accompany trade

liberalization. In the long run, the removal of subsidies for fisheries and agriculture has the potential to benefit biodiversity; in the short term, trade liberalization will accelerate its loss if not well-planned.

Biodiversity considerations must be integrated into any poverty reduction strategy in order to ensure their sustainability. Biodiversity will be better protected through actions that are justified on their economic merits. Developing tools for the valuation of biodiversity is therefore of utmost priority.

Therefore, we still have a lot of work to significantly reduce the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national levels. But the Target can be achieved through local actions and global programmes. Most important is the engagement of all in the spirit of collaboration, including governments, local authorities, local and indigenous communities, scientific institutions, NGOs, the private sector, women, and youth. We owe future generations a healthy environment. There is no time for delay.

Thank you for your kind attention.