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Biodiversity and Climate Change

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by

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

of the

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

at the

**MEETING OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR
THE PROGRAMME OF WORK ON COMMUNICATION,
EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS**

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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished experts,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to welcome you all to this meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee for the Programme of Work on Communication, Education and Public Awareness. Since the creation of this group only a few years ago, it has developed and grown. It is a pleasure to see the depth and breadth of expertise present here today.

I also wish to extend my thanks to our hosts, the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, who has provided us with this wonderful venue, and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, which has provided support to the travel of many participants.

We need to act urgently to save life on our planet. Recent scientific assessments have provided a disturbing picture of the state of the biodiversity on our planet. From the work of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, which documented the decline in ecosystem services around the planet, the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which pointed out the horrifying consequences of unmitigated climate change, the recently released fourth edition of the Global Environment Outlook and the upcoming International Agricultural Assessment, the scientific evidence is loud and clear—we are on the verge of the sixth extinction crisis.

Human actions have the power to reshape the planet and its ecosystems, but humanity also has the ability to reshape the way it produces and consumes, and substantially reduce our collective impact on the planet. As the scientists who worked on the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment pointed out, if we hope to achieve the 2010 target, we have to redouble our efforts and involve citizens and all the stakeholders.

However, encouraging people to take these extra steps for the sake of life on Earth is going to require more than the raw scientific data. If we wish to mobilize the people of the world we will need to convince them to act, to inspire them to act.

To inspire them we need to communicate, educate and raise public awareness.

We need to *communicate* the state of the biodiversity crisis in ways that make the urgency immediate. The world will soon be a community of urban dwellers, who are removed from the ecosystems of the planet. We will need to find images and stories of habitat and climate change, of pollution and overexploitation, that make these populations feel like this is happening near them.

We need *education* to show citizens the importance of biodiversity to the lives of people around the planet. Many people do not realize the benefits that biodiversity provides. For example, the freshwater that flows from watersheds into over three dozen of the world's largest cities relies on biodiversity. The pharmaceuticals upon which most of the world's medicine is based are products of these ecosystems. Protection against the extreme weather generated by climate change is found in the forests, watersheds and natural coastlines of our planet.

This education also needs to have a dimension of the value of these ecosystem services for the poor. It is they, above all, who will suffer when biodiversity is lost. We need to educate people about the inequity and injustice of this state of affairs.

We need to raise *public awareness* about the actions that Governments are taking and need to continue to take, under the auspices of the Convention. The Parties to Convention, through the programmes of work they have adopted, have developed the tools needed to address biodiversity loss and to ensure sustainable use. These tools are more likely to be implemented by Governments if an aware citizenry knows of them and demands action.

This is what CEPA is about. It is a tall order – communication needs to cross continents and languages, cultures and socio economic sectors. This effort can only be realized with the participation of our partners. The broad participation in this meeting demonstrates the network of partners that we are building. I mention just a few groups today:

- UNESCO – our partner in developing education;
- IUCN – through its Commission for Education and Communication, we are diffusing toolkits on communication. Through its Countdown 2010 programme, we are spreading the message of the 2010 biodiversity target around the world;
- UNEP—our host agency—provides us with expertise in communication and evaluation;
- UNEP offices, such as Grid Arendal and WCMC, provide us scientific expertise and know-how on how to represent complex sets of data to the world;
- Our media partners such as Television Trust for the Environment and Inter Press Services, help us reach out to audiences around the world;
- The Parties are also our partners. Whether it is through national CEPA programmes, or through the provision of support to communication efforts such as the International Day for Biological Diversity, you are the means through which we can spread the message throughout the world.

I am pleased to report that together have made considerable advances over the biennium to advance the CEPA programme of work. Through actions by the Secretariat and the Parties, we have advanced on most of the activities in the short list of priority activities identified by the Conference of the Parties at its eighth meeting. Let me highlight a few points.

- *Mobilization of resources.* It has been wonderful to see resources made available by a number of Parties for support to the programme of work. In 2007, for the first time, we had substantial support to the celebrations of the International Day for Biological Diversity. The generous contributions of the government of Norway permitted the creation of an information kit, a promotional video, a number of episodes broadcast on the BBC. All of this resulted in the most extensive celebrations ever, with almost half of the Parties reporting celebrations to the Secretariat. We also received generous support from the Government of Spain to support outreach

activities, including information materials. The Government of the Netherlands has now provided funding to activities for the CEPA programme of work over the next four years, ensuring that the foundations will be set up for future work. Finally, we must mention the support that has been provided by the Government of Germany for this meeting and for the communications preparation work for the third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook;

- *The production of a toolkit.* Communicating is a skill that requires training and some expertise. Thanks to the financial support of the government of the Netherlands, and the expertise of the CEC of IUCN, we now have a toolkit on CEPA that can be employed by focal points, NBSAP coordinators and others to ensure that CEPA is a central element of any policy implementation. This toolkit has already been used in workshops on NBSAPs, by the Convention. With the translation of this kit into local languages, it will be accessible to many others;
- *Training the media.* As a result of the efforts of the Secretariat, we enjoy better relations with the media than ever before. The global media coverage of eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention was among the highest ever. The media coverage of IBD 2007, aided by a strategic partnership with IPS, was truly global. The Secretariat will extend these successes with a series of media-training workshops, including one before the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and then a series of regional ones to follow;
- *The International Day for Biological Diversity.* This is perhaps one of the biggest outreach tools of the Convention;
- *Outreach to business* is another major tool in engaging the private sector in the implementation of the Convention.

There are a number of things that we must do. First, the development of national CEPA strategies. Many Parties have made considerable efforts to use CEPA to help policy implementation, or to simply raise awareness. Some need this to be created. The Secretariat would like to work with Parties to help develop national strategies. In 2008 and beyond, a series of regional workshops will help set up these national strategies and

We also need to integrate biodiversity into the educational curriculum of the Parties. The youth of today will be the leaders of tomorrow. Our ability to cultivate the values of sustainable development and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in them is central to the future of our planet. That is why the Secretariat is working with UNESCO, to develop the tools and plans to integrate biodiversity into educational curriculum around the world. We are fortunate to begin this initiative while the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development is in full swing.

All of these efforts will take resources. We need a model to mobilize the resources of the public and private sectors in support of this. A consortium of partners or a “Friends of CEPA” is needed.

Let me say a few words about the upcoming third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook. It was my pleasure to launch the second edition of the Outlook at the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The message of the Outlook was heard

loud and clear around the world: biodiversity continues to be lost, and this will have consequences for humanity and the poor. But, if we implement the Convention on Biological Diversity we have the opportunity to achieve the 2010 target of achieving a substantial reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss. The Outlook is being translated into Japanese and German.

With the launch of the third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook in 2010, we have another opportunity to transmit the message to the community – there are examples of people who are achieving the 2010 biodiversity target. We need to duplicate these efforts. I am pleased that so many of you are here at the meeting to discuss the communications goals and efforts which will enhance the impact of this flagship publication when it is released in 2010, the International Year for Biodiversity.

The next big goal is the celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010. As you know, as its sixty-first session, the United Nations General Assembly gave the Convention a tremendous opportunity when it declared 2010 to be the International Year of Biodiversity. With years ahead of us to prepare, we have the chance to raise awareness of the roots of, and solutions to, the biodiversity crisis and the role of the Convention in ensuring a sustainable future for our children. You have before you elements of a draft strategy for ensuring that the Year is a success, and I look forward to your suggestions and comments to move this from a draft to an operational strategy for the year.

We are close to 2010 and we all know that a redoubling of efforts is needed to achieve the ambitious agenda that has been set. We also know that we need to send a message of hope. In this respect, the work that you will do on the third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook is vital—the Outlook should send a message of hope, and show how people around the world, are working to achieve the 2010 target. We need to send the message that their efforts are the first steps towards saving life on earth. We also need to remind people of the goals and aspirations that were asserted over 15 years ago at the Earth Summit in Rio.

In conclusion, let me leave you in the able hands of your Chair, Dr. Peter Bos. I know that under his guidance you will have a successful and productive meeting.