

**13th Meeting of the
Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
(SBSTTA)
of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

**FAO Headquarters
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Opening statement by

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Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. FAO is very pleased to host this important meeting, the Thirteenth Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity. By hosting this meeting, FAO wishes to express its sincere wish to further strengthen and deepen the dialogue between environment and agriculture and the cooperation between FAO and the CBD.

This meeting will focus on matters which are closely related to FAO's core mandate – namely, the Programmes of Work on Agricultural Biodiversity and Forest Biodiversity, as well as the issues of sustainable use; invasive alien species; marine, coastal and inland water ecosystems biodiversity and climate change.

Achieving food security for all is at the heart of FAO's efforts - to make sure people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives. FAO's mandate is to raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity, better the lives of rural populations and contribute to the growth of the world economy while conserving the natural resource base. FAO is at the forefront of this endeavour. As spelt out in our Constitution – adopted in 1945 – we "shall promote and, where appropriate, shall recommend national and international action with respect to: *inter alia* the conservation of natural resources and the adoption of improved methods of agricultural production".

Biodiversity is vital for human survival and livelihoods; we need to conserve it for future generations. At the same time, the unacceptable scale of hunger and rural poverty on our small planet calls for urgent remedial action. Our common goal must therefore be a sustainable world with global food security. Mainstreaming biodiversity into the food and agriculture, livestock, fisheries and forestry sectors will be critical to provide humankind with opportunities for increasing food availability and stability while maintaining a healthy natural capital for future generations. Understanding these fundamental linkages – often forgotten or underestimated – between the production sectors, on the one hand, and biodiversity, on the other, is essential for achieving global food security and sustainable development.

Well managed production systems will supply a better balance of ecosystem services from agriculture; meeting society's demands for improving livelihoods as well as the environment.

The conservation and sustainable management of our natural capital are also critical elements for achieving international development and environmental objectives, such as the 2010 Biodiversity Target and the Millennium

Development Goals. In this framework, FAO addresses biodiversity conservation and sustainable use for food security through an interdisciplinary approach and through fostering partnerships and synergies to undertake actions related to knowledge management, technical assistance, and policy development and implementation.

At the policy level, FAO provides a forum where governments discuss and negotiate issues related to biodiversity for food and agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Major successes at this level include the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the recently adopted Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources and, of course, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. In fact, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is the only inter-governmental body which *specifically* deals with the conservation and sustainable utilization of genetic resources for food and agriculture, as well the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from their use, for present and future generations. The Commission, at its last Session in June of last year, adopted a Multi-Year Programme of Work which sets out a planned and staged approach towards the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity for food and agriculture. This Programme of Work is an excellent vehicle to strengthen cooperation in relation to biodiversity for food and agriculture, both within FAO and between FAO and other relevant international bodies and instruments, in particular the Convention on Biological Diversity.

There are also emerging new complex challenges for food and agriculture, such as climate change, where cooperation needs to be fostered. FAO looks forward to the participation of the CBD at the High Level Conference on World Food

Security and the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy, which will be held in FAO from 3-5 June.

I would personally like to strongly encourage each and every one of you to take advantage of this week at FAO, to discuss, debate, and engage with us at FAO, in order to make the most out of your time here. This is an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the work that is on-going - through FAO and its international fora, at the global level – to implement FAO's core mandate, to implement the Programmes of Work of the CBD, and to ultimately meet the challenges of sustainable agricultural production to ensure food security for all peoples, especially the rural poor – often the managers and custodians of our biodiversity.

In wishing you a successful meeting here at FAO; allow me to conclude by acknowledging also the generous support of FAO's host country, Italy, and in particular its Ministry for Environment Land and Sea to this meeting, – a meeting marking another step in our global efforts towards global food security and poverty eradication within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals..

Thank you.