



Secretariat of the
Convention on Biological Diversity



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**BIODIVERSITY
AND AGRICULTURE**

Statement by the Executive Secretary

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on the occasion of

The KfW and BioFrankfurt Evening

“Achievements of the CBD and Challenges of COP 9 and Beyond”

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ONE NATURE • ONE WORLD • OUR FUTURE
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are 16,306 species currently listed as critically endangered, endangered, or vulnerable – 71 of which are here in Germany. Every year 13 million hectares of forests are destroyed. As climate change progresses, more and more species and fragile habitats become threatened with extinction. The world is facing an unprecedented planetary environmental challenge. Impacts on the natural functions of our planet have never been as destructive as in the last 50 years. It is estimated that over the past one hundred years humans have increased species extinction rates by as much as 1,000 times the typical background rates over Earth's history—as inferred from the fossil record over Earth's history. The impacts from this biodiversity loss do not end when the forest meets the road, nor do they remain hidden under the seas.

Biodiversity is the foundation of our lives. Without it, we do not have food, shelter, clothing, clean air or water – let alone the many modern conveniences that make our lives more comfortable. Everyone is being affected and especially the poor who rely most directly on nature for survival. As Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland stated, “You cannot tackle hunger, disease, and poverty unless you can also provide people with a healthy ecosystem in which their economies can grow.” Therefore, it is an honour to participate in this evening's activities, sponsored by the KfW Development Bank. The work done by KfW in countries around the world to alleviate poverty and promote sustainable development contributes to the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD): conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of its components, and the equitable sharing of benefits derived from the use of genetic resources.

While there are many organizations, such as yourselves and the CBD, that are working hard to protect biodiversity, losses continue. And while many of these losses are causing irreparable damage to ecosystems around the world, and indeed contributing to other socio-economic and environmental difficulties, biodiversity issues have still not been given the urgent status needed to mobilize collective international political will. It is for these reasons that I am here with you this evening, and it is for these reasons, that the CBD, like yourselves, has been working to raise public awareness of the issues.

I would like to take a moment to recognize the invaluable work that BioFrankfurt has carried out since its formation in 2004. In particular I commend your efforts during this period leading up to the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, to be held in Bonn this May. The projects such as the public awareness campaign that you launched just two months ago are key to building recognition of the imperative and vital nature of reducing biodiversity loss. Considering that Frankfurt is a major global hub, initiatives to engage its inhabitants have a truly international reach. I thank you for your commitment.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the famous son of the city of Frankfurt, stated in his essay on nature, “NATURE! We are surrounded and embraced by her: powerless to separate ourselves from her, and powerless to penetrate beyond her. Without asking, or warning, she snatches us up into her circling dance, and whirls us on until we are tired, and drop from her arms. ...Each of her works has an essence of its own; each of her phenomena a special characterisation: and yet their diversity is in unity.”

I feel that this quote captures one of the most fundamental and vital, yet vulnerable, aspect of the natural world; the interconnectedness of its different species and ecosystems makes it unique, special, and irreplaceable. It is for this reason that we are here today— to ensure the protection and sustainable use of the symphony of nature that is found in Germany and in the world today. Moreover, because every person on this planet draws on global biodiversity in every aspect of his or her life, from health to employment to recreation, actually achieving conservation of biodiversity requires a multi-layered web of intersecting initiatives involving all stakeholders. As such, the CBD has been working with many different stakeholders and on a variety of issues since the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties, while simultaneously endeavouring to raise awareness on these challenges.

Among them are, for example, access and benefit sharing; traditional knowledge, innovations and practices; trade and economics; technology transfer; biodiversity and tourism; the sustainable use of

biodiversity; the ecosystem approach; protected areas; forest biodiversity and biodiversity and climate change. Just to name a few.

Indeed, the year 2007 was a remarkable year due to extensive media attention and strengthened public awareness to the inescapable reality of climate change and its impacts on our biodiversity. More so than in any previous year, the issue of climate change was brought out of the domain of the science community, into the forefront of mass public debate, and mainstreamed into the consciousness of billions of people worldwide. Mitigation and adaptation was on the agenda of the 13 environment ministers of the G8 and five major newly industrializing countries (G8+5) as they met in March. Representing the first time that G8+5 environment and development ministers met together, it was also the first time they discussed climate-change commitments since the 1997 Kyoto Climate Summit and, in particular, its links with biodiversity. Under the "Potsdam Initiative on Biological Diversity 2010," ministers agreed to initiate the process of analysing the global economic benefits of biodiversity, the cost of biodiversity loss and the cost of not taking protective measures versus the cost of effective conservation.

Linked to biodiversity and climate change issues has been work on forest biodiversity. Considering that deforestation currently accounts for 18-25 per cent of all carbon emissions, maintaining healthy, intact forests is key to not only protecting forest biodiversity but mitigating climate change as well. Progress in these two areas has been achieved through cooperation with relevant United Nations conventions such as the Framework for Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC), Combating Desertification (UNCCD) and the Forum on Forests (UNFF).

Another area of focus, I wish to highlight, is Protected Areas. Well-managed protected areas are a proven mechanism for the conservation and maintenance of healthy ecosystems and the services they provide. Protected areas, to quote from Nelson Mandela, are "genetic store-houses that promise a healthier future for the planet and its people. Safeguarding these precious areas means safeguarding our future". Without the extensive benefits of protected areas, sustainable development and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals may well be an insurmountable task. In fact, evidence shows that well-managed protected areas yield significant benefits, which can be translated into cumulative advantages across a national economy. Moreover, as unprecedented climate change becomes a reality, protected areas are key to buffering the inevitable, yet unpredictable impacts.

Indeed, as I alluded to above, and as the BioFrankfurt knows first-hand, creating synergies between different organisations is a valuable tool to achieving the greatest progress with often limited resources. Moreover, sharing of expertise and information enables an organisation to identify areas of for potential cooperation. Naturally, to achieve change, one must begin with local actions, then national, regional, and finally international. Initiatives at each level must be mutually reinforcing and thus require dialogue and cooperation. It is for this reason, that in the past year, the Secretariat has signed memoranda of understanding with more than 21 sister agencies and partners.

I am very pleased to note that some of our newest champions of conservation of biodiversity have come from the least like groups: cities and business. And yet, in some ways, this is not all that surprising.

With half of the world's population currently living in urban centres, those who seem to be the least dependent on nature in fact have the greatest effect on it. As urban areas expand to accommodate this increase, they encroach on natural habitats and green spaces, contributing to environmental degradation generally, and loss of biodiversity specifically. In addition to "taking over" land for their physical expansion, cities indirectly encourage land conversion to agricultural activities in order to meet the needs of growing urban populations. Although cities occupy only 2.8 per cent of the Earth's surface, urban dwellers use 75 per cent of the planet's natural resources. Hence, the important role of cities in reducing biodiversity loss is clear. It is for this reason that Bonn's Lady Mayor Bärbel Dieckmann will follow-up on the initiative begun at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and host an "International Mayors' Conference on Local Action for Biodiversity" parallel to the ninth meeting of Conference of the Parties—to ensure that as urban centres grow we protect the planet's incredible wealth of species and ecosystems.

While the business sector may seem an equally unlikely partner, in addressing the New York business community in 2007, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated that: “The United Nations and business need each other,” and that business, trade and investment are “essential pillars of peace and prosperity.” In today’s interdependent world, business and the United Nations share common goals of “building and supporting strong economies and communities, providing opportunities for people to pursue a livelihood, and ensuring that everyone can live in dignity.” Indeed, the Convention’s engagement with the private sector began with a ministerial breakfast at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in Curitiba, Brazil. This linkage will continue in Bonn and this time, the business community have been granted a much larger platform, reflecting the important and unique role that business can play in the conservation of biodiversity. In fact, the European private sector will present to the Conference of the Parties the “Message from Lisbon on Business and Biodiversity.” This represents a commitment made during a business and biodiversity conference in Lisbon last November by more than 500 participants, including 162 representatives from the private sector, to increase collaboration with other stakeholders to reduce biodiversity loss, as well as to include biodiversity considerations in their business activities.

As Chancellor Angela Merkel stated in the Bundestag in March, “ecology and economy are compatible and...strategies can be developed which facilitate both economic growth and the creation of jobs while ensuring that natural resources are used sustainably”. It is a simple truth that the three objectives of the Convention will be achieved only when the value of biodiversity, including its non-monetary components and the ecosystem services generated, is well understood by the public at large and fully integrated into decision-making at all scales and in all economic and social sectors. This requires integrating biodiversity and ecosystem-services considerations into land-use policy and planning, into agricultural, forestry, fishery, tourism policies, and into trade and development cooperation policies. It requires a paradigm shift—the environment is no longer a “soft” issue, and must be placed at the top of the global political and economic agenda. As Achim Steiner, a German national and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, highlighted last November at the launch of the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), “We need a new ethic in which every person changes lifestyle, attitude, and behaviour.” This is what BioFrankfurt has been working towards. This is what the Secretariat has been working towards. This is what the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties will be about.

Germany’s leadership, as the host country of the forthcoming meeting of the Conference of the Parties, is crucial to the success of the Conference—one that will have the pressing task of considering the ways and means of achieving the 2010 biodiversity target of achieving a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss. Germany’s leadership in, and commitment to, biodiversity issues and the three objectives of the Convention was re-emphasized in December 2007 with the adoption of its national biodiversity strategy. The German strategy is a shining example of what a national biodiversity strategy should entail and the development process it requires. The strategy contains a concrete vision, action areas, flagship projects and concrete measures on innovation and employment, as well as activities to combat poverty and promote justice—all under the rubric of conservation of biodiversity. It aims not only to implement the Convention at national level, taking fully into account its European commitments, but includes also Germany’s contribution to the protection of biodiversity worldwide. The strategy contains a clear vision for the future with objective, justifiable targets ranging from the immediate action to the year 2050. Moreover, the strategy has been further elaborated through input from seven thematic regional forums involving the country’s 16 Länder, to be held in Hanover, Munich, Lübbenau, Essen, Schwerin, Stuttgart and Frankfurt. Such all-encompassing efforts have never been seen before.

The roots of these initiatives are deeply embedded in Germany’s identity, culture and heritage. A representative survey of the population on environmental awareness in Germany commissioned by the Ministry of the Environment found that 90 per cent of respondents consider it very or quite important to prevent species extinction and to ensure nature conservation. About 290 million people visit nature parks, national parks and biosphere reserves in Germany each year. Forty-two per cent of Germans who take holidays in their own country rate time spent outdoors in nature as particularly important. According to the survey, nature and landscape help to strengthen regional identity and shape a sense of home. It is

therefore not surprising that the 48,000 animal species and approximately 14,400 fungi species and 9,500 plant species found in Germany are protected by 97 nature parks, 14 national parks and 14 biosphere reserves. 13, 5 % of the total land area of the country and 41 % of the marine areas of Germany, comprising 5,000 sites, are covered by the European Natura 2000.

What is lost in one country is lost to the world. Individual efforts by communities, regions, nations, and organizations must be brought together so as to ensure that activities around the world are supporting each other rather than counteracting each other. Neither flora nor fauna adhere to human-drawn borders and thus initiatives at each level must be mutually reinforcing and require dialogue and cooperation. This is the important role played by the Convention on Biological Diversity. Our mandate is to encourage, support, and demand actions to conserve biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. Only through synergistic action and social solidarity will we reverse biodiversity loss.

As you may or may not know, 2010 will be a truly remarkable year for the Convention on Biological Diversity. It is the target year for achieving a reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss. It is the year when the world will celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity. It is the year by which an international regime on access and benefit sharing must be finalized. It is the year when Nagoya, Japan, will host the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Preparing for these milestones is what the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties will be about.

The outcomes of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties will set the wheels in motion for the next two years. Charting the most direct path between the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and these deadlines will be the responsibility of each Parties, and Germany, as President of the Conference of the Parties will be at the helm. With less than two years to go before the 2010 biodiversity target deadline, the road ahead is truly daunting and poses a great challenge for the global community. However, as Frankfurt's own Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once stated, "Fresh activity is the only means of overcoming adversity". And indeed, Germany as host of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties has truly injected fresh activity into addressing biodiversity issues and introduced innovative ways to bring the world together to tackle the adversity we are facing. Outlining all of your country's efforts would take another hour! Let me simply, yet whole-heartedly say, that the German Government has shown unprecedented leadership throughout the last two years in preparing for the Bonn meeting and ensuring that biodiversity is well and truly on the international agenda, as well as in the consciousness of the average citizen.

It is for these reasons that I look forward to the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties with great anticipation and expectation. With such tremendous support, the positive energy has been built and will hopefully spill over to the Parties to ensure that this meeting successfully addresses the many issues on the table. More importantly, I trust that this momentum will be harnessed so as to guide the work of all parties and organizations until the following meeting of the Conference of the Parties, successfully allowing the Convention and the world to achieve the goals that have been laid out.

I thank the German Government and citizens alike for embracing their role as hosts and working to make the Bonn meeting a true success. I commend BioFrankfurt for doing their part to support these efforts and for their commitment to raising awareness of the dramatic implications of biodiversity loss and encourage you to continue with you important work.

As Goethe said: "Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it."

Herzlichen Dank.