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Statement by

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**“Meeting the 2010 biodiversity target: A contribution to
poverty alleviation and the benefit of life on Earth”**

at the IUCN World Conservation Forum

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

For many of us who live in well-established cities, we no longer notice where our food, water, building materials, or medicines come from. A complex procurement system ensures that these resources are at our finger tips and ready to use. But for the one billion people who live in extreme poverty, it is often a daily struggle to meet basic needs. There is no fine-tuned system in place for them. Nature, its diversity of species and intricate ecosystems is their only provider; they must go right to the source. With the current rate of loss of biological diversity, accessing these bare necessities becomes harder and harder. This reality may eventually hit each of us if we do not increase our efforts to achieve the 2010 Biodiversity Target. The unfolding food crisis is a wake-up call and may be the beginning of a new era of scarcity of natural resources.

The celebrated Spanish ecologist Ramón Margalef once said that “man is not only a problem for himself, but also for the biosphere in which he finds himself living.” As evidenced by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, biodiversity is being lost at unprecedented rate. During the past 50 years, humans have altered ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any other period in human history. These transformations have impacted the ecosystem services upon which all life relies and indeed such environmental degradation feeds back to undermine our quality of life and long-term well-being.

The poor will continue to suffer the most. More than 1.6 billion people depend on forests and forest products for their livelihood, while more than 3 billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity. And yet, more than 13.2 million hectares of forests are lost annually and some predict that fish may disappear from the oceans by 2048. Almost 30 million small-scale fishers in the developing world dependent on coral reefs for food and livelihood, but 60 per cent of reefs could be lost by 2030.

In Africa, seven in ten people live in rural areas and most of them are engaged in resource-dependent activities such as small-scale agriculture, which accounts for more than 90 per cent of Africa’s agricultural production. However, IPCC predicts that climate change will seriously affect the agriculture sector in Africa. Due to pressure from climate change, between 25 and 40 per cent of mammals in national parks in Sub-Sahara Africa will become endangered. This loss is threatening one of the key industries linked to sustainable development in Africa – tourism. In southern Africa it was valued at US\$ 3.6 billion in 2000. In Tanzania, the value of wildlife for tourism is estimated at US\$ 570 million per year.

Mont Kilimanjaro is not only a tourist destination but its cloud forests provide an important source of water for the surrounding population. Over the past 30 years, however, deforestation has caused the loss of annual drinking water supply equivalent to the requirements of one million people. Every year more than 13 million hectares of forests are disappearing. UNEP’s Global Environment Outlook highlighted: “as human well-being declines, the options available to people that allow them to regulate their use of natural resources at sustainable levels declines as well. This in turn increases pressure on ecosystem services and can create a downward spiral of increasing poverty and further degradation of ecosystem services.”

Thus, the link between conserving biodiversity and addressing climate change, hunger, poverty reduction and food security is clear. It is for this reason that the Secretary General responded to the call from the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to integrate the 2010 biodiversity target as part of the Millennium Development Goals. And yet, we are destroying biodiversity at a faster rate than at any other period in human history. Unless we take urgent action, this trend will not be reversed. 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.” In undermining biodiversity, we are undermining sustainable development—both of which are being exacerbated by changing climatic conditions, an unprecedented environmental challenge. Yet, therein lies the key.

Due to the interconnected nature of all life on Earth, while degradation in one area limits progress in another, the converse is also true: improvements in one area support progress in another. Evidence shows that robust biodiversity and healthy ecosystems not only help mitigate climate change, they also help support rural livelihoods. Indeed, natural capital constitutes 26 per cent of the wealth of low-income countries. If we can conserve biodiversity, we conserve our chances for sustainable development, poverty alleviation and healthy lives.

Meeting these unprecedented challenges requires enhanced and concerted efforts at all levels for the effective implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It calls on the international community to redouble its efforts to achieve by 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity, the target of substantially reducing the loss of biodiversity and adopting an international regime on access to genetic resources and the equitable sharing of the benefits from their utilization.

The 5000 participants to the recent historical Bonn Biodiversity Summit reaffirmed their commitment at all levels to redouble efforts to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target. The nine meeting of the Conference of the Parties was the birthplace of the Global Alliance, with the active engagement of all stakeholders including Business. Indeed 20 out of the 37 decisions taken at COP-9 call on Parties and the Secretariat to address development and poverty issues through biodiversity initiatives. In particular, decision IX/25 on South-South cooperation highlights this as a powerful tool to enhance international cooperation for achieving sustainable development and in this era of rapid globalization the importance of such cooperation cannot be overemphasized.

Also during COP-9, a high-level panel was convened on Biodiversity for Development and Poverty Alleviation, which saw the official launching of the new Biodiversity for Development Initiative, established by the Secretariat with the support of the French and German Governments. Moreover, the German Government launched a major initiative to enhance the scope and management of protected areas. Entitled the *LifeWeb Initiative*, its aim is to match voluntary commitments for the designation of new protected areas and improved management of existing areas with commitments for dedicated financing. More specifically, the *LifeWeb Initiative* will strive to provide funds to the Governments who are willing to protect more areas but do not have the financial means to do so.

Indeed the value of protected areas is multifaceted. In cooperation with the Friends of Protected Area Work Programme, the Secretariat, at COP-9, launched the report on “The Value of Nature: ecological, economic, cultural and social benefits of protected areas”. It provides concrete examples of how a robust biodiversity has helped to alleviate poverty to date and highlights how global efforts are making a difference:

- The Maya biosphere Reserve in Guatemala generates an annual income of about US\$ 47 million and provides employment to 7000 people.
- Four forest management reserves, totally 40,000km² designated in 2006 for sustainable timber extraction are expected to generate US\$ 100 million in annual gross revenue from timber, and create 8600 jobs.
- In Matang, Malaysia, each square kilometer of mangrove is worth about US\$ 250,000 per year in fishery value alone.
- In the Philippines, a 2006 report found that after strong enforcement of laws against illegal fishing in Mabini Marine Protected Area, local people saw their average daily fish catch jump from 2 to 8 kilograms per day.

In Fontainebleau, in 1948, at your very first General Assembly, your organization noted that “one of the most effective means of ensuring the Protection of Nature is to make the world aware of the extreme seriousness of this question.” At your 50th anniversary celebrations, again in Fontainebleau, IUCN highlighted that “Our challenge is not just to imagine, but to build a world that values and conserves nature, and that is confident in its commitment to equity.” Now as you celebrate your 60th anniversary, here in Barcelona at your 4th World Congress, I congratulate you on the tremendous work you have carried out over the past 60 years. You have grown from a union of 19 governments, 7 international organizations, and 106 national nature conservation organizations into the world’s oldest and largest global environmental network - with more than 1,000 government and NGO member organizations, and almost 11,000 volunteer scientists in more than 160 countries. You have highlighted the vital importance of biodiversity to human well-being as well as underlined the serious loss of species that humans are causing. Daily you are achieving your goal outlined in 1948.

This past May, COP-9 adopted a road map for the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit to be held in October 2010. It called for a High Level Segment of the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly to be held in New York, in September 2010, to assess progress for achieving the 2010 biodiversity and shaping the way forward. As we inch ever closer to 2010, I encourage you to continue your outstanding efforts and continue to work closely with the CBD, not only to achieve the 2010 Biodiversity Target, but also to help make the International Year for Biodiversity, in 2010, the year that *Homo sapiens* shifted away from its single-minded anthropocentrism, and began living as one of millions of species on this Earth. Indeed, as you declared in 1948, “an essential condition for success to this is end is the education not only of children and their teachers, but of the public in general.”

IUCN celebrates its 60th anniversary at this its 4th World Congress, and it is worth recalling that the Universal Declaration on Human Rights is also 60 years old this year. Article 25 emphasizes that “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care.” On the road to Nagoya, IUCN has a major role to play and we look forward to working with IUCN and its members to translate into reality this basic human right for a healthy environment which cannot exist without the full and effective implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Life on Earth. I would like to pay tribute to IUCN’s Countdown 2010 initiative and its unique role in the implementation of the three objectives of the convention. I would also like to pay tribute in advance to the Director General of IUCN for its planned contribution to the celebration of the 2010 International Year on Biodiversity. This organization’s 60 years of dedication have been invaluable to the diversity of life on Earth.

In his 1994 farewell speech, at IUCN’s 19th General Assembly, the outgoing Director General, Dr. Martin Holdgate noted that:

“If IUCN is to realize its potential, it must lead from its strengths... it must speak, if not with one voice, with the harmony of many choral voices rather than the cacophony of divisive argument..... if the IUCN is seen as a Union of its members and its members’ members: if it delivers a clear, compelling message that all of them can promote, in harmony with the world’s diverse social values and traditions, moving with the grain of human culture and belief, we can do a great deal.”

I believe that this should also be applied to the international community of organizations that work to conserve biodiversity. We must join our voices and our efforts in order to compel the world to achieve the changes vital to the well-being of all life on Earth – to ensure that man is no longer a “problem for himself and the biosphere in which he finds himself living”. I am certain that we shall be inspired by this wisdom in our common journey to the 2010 and the Nagoya summit on biodiversity.

Thank you for your kind attention.