



Secretariat of the
Convention on Biological Diversity



INTERNATIONAL
DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY
22 May 2008
**BIODIVERSITY
AND AGRICULTURE**

STATEMENT

by

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**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

at the

**AD HOC INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND MULTI-
STAKEHOLDER MEETING ON AN
INTERGOVERNMENTAL SCIENCE-POLICY PLATFORM
ON BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES**

**Putrajaya, Malaysia
10-12 November 2008**



Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour to address you today in Kuala Lumpur. I wish to thank the Government of Malaysia for hosting this ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting. As host of the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the first meeting of the Parties of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, Malaysia is in a unique position to make a distinct contribution in addressing the interface between science and policy on biodiversity-related issues. The Executive Secretary also asked me to convey to the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) his deep appreciation for the arrangements made for this meeting and for the participatory approach followed for its preparation. He asked me also to convey to the French authorities his gratitude for having kept the Parties and the Secretariat regularly involved and informed since the inception of this initiative in Paris in January 2005.

The fact that we are here together represents in itself a success. Seven years after the launch and three and a half years after the formal completion of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, nearly four years after the initiation by the French authorities of the International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity (IMoSEB), we are here to work out the details of an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The consultative process put in motion under this initiative is an impressive testimony to the importance attached by Governments and stakeholders to get it right. It is for this reason that the 5,000 participants attending the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Bonn in May 2008, in adopting decision IX/15, noted the need for improved scientific information, as related to, *inter alia*, the interests of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and other biodiversity-related conventions with a view to strengthening the role of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and the scientific advisory bodies of other biodiversity-related conventions.

The Conference of the Parties welcomed the agreement of the Executive Director of UNEP to convene this meeting and invited Parties to ensure that appropriate science and policy experts are made available to attend. The Parties also requested the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention to consider, at its third meeting, the outcome of this meeting and its implications for the implementation and organization of work of the Convention, including its Strategic Plan, and to make recommendations for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its tenth meeting.

Mobilizing the scientific community in support of the three objectives of the Convention is today more than ever required. However, what is needed is a lean system that provides authoritative biodiversity science to decision makers at all levels; a system that strengthens and supports existing bodies, such as the Convention's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, rather than competing and weakening them; a system that provides policy-relevant but not policy-prescriptive advice; a system

that has firm intergovernmental backing while ensuring the independence of the scientists involved; a system that combines cutting-edge science with multi-disciplinarity, wide representation and stakeholder involvement.

All these are lessons drawn from the experience of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and the consultations on an International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity. Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, including its Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and the Secretariat, were deeply involved in both of these processes. The Secretariat also contributed to the development of the MA follow-up strategy and the preparations for this meeting. Governments took a major step forward at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties; it will be the task of this meeting to define the form and format of the platform. I am convinced that we can overcome differences among the countries and stakeholders represented here about some details if we keep in mind the principles I have just outlined.

Two years from now, in Nagoya, Japan, the Parties to the Convention will assess progress towards the current biodiversity target and establish a new target as part of the Convention's updated Strategic Plan. A lot is at stake for the Convention on Biological Diversity and other agreements and processes, for Governments and stakeholders. All signals indicate that biodiversity loss continues unabated and that the consequences are frightening. We can no longer afford to ignore our living environment. We need to act now, but we need to act wisely. We need credible scientific advice that allows us to make these wise decisions so that biodiversity loss can be halted before the foundations of life on Earth are irremediably damaged. An agreement on an efficient intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services would help ensure that the Convention and the broader system in international environmental governance are well equipped to prevent the dangerous consequences of biodiversity loss in this century.

I thank you for your attention.

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