



Convention on
Biological Diversity



STATEMENT

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

ON THE OCCASION OF

ASIA-EUROPE ENVIRONMENT FORUM 7TH ROUNDTABLE

**PANEL DISCUSSION ON
ASIA AND EUROPE – COMMITTED TO CONSERVING ECOSYSTEM
SERVICES FOR PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY AND HUMAN
WELL-BEING?**

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Ladies and gentlemen, fellow panellists,

Shakespeare said that one touch of nature makes the whole world kin. This Asia-Europe roundtable on biodiversity and ecosystems services demonstrates this wisdom nicely. We are meeting here together in recognition of the fact that people from different regions must work together to preserve the biological diversity that we all depend on so greatly. We are meeting here together in recognition of the fact that regions in the world need to play a leadership role. Germany hosted the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, and Japan will be hosting the tenth meeting. In our common journey from Bonn to Nagoya, the Asia-Europe Forum on Environment has a unique role to play. The fact that Japan is hosting for the first time your forum is not a pure coincidence. The fact also that your forum has selected for the first time biodiversity as a theme is also not also a pure coincidence. Indeed, Japan will be hosting the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, in October 2010.

Japan is also an appropriate place for today's meeting because of this country's long history of ecosystem-based land management techniques, as reflected in the practice of *satoyama*. Local agricultural communities and villages in Japan historically have preserved the forests that provided them with both wood and fertilizer, with their techniques later being applied to larger areas of forests, grasslands, streams and ponds, dry rice fields and rice paddies. As Europe and Asia share a history of intensive land management, *Satoyama* presents a model approach for both regions and a potential common topic of work. "Follow nature and return to nature", advised the celebrated Japanese poet Matsuo Basho – words to keep in mind as we together strive to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

As you know, almost eight years ago the international community resolved to significantly slow the rate of biodiversity loss worldwide by 2010 as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth. Today the deadline for the 2010 biodiversity target is around the corner. Despite the progress we have made to date, all indications are that the target will not be met.

In Asia, for example, the situation continues to be troubling. This region sustains 30 per cent of the world's coral reefs and mangroves, produces 40 per cent of the world's fish catch, and is considered one of the world's centres for tropical marine biodiversity. Yet climate change alone may eliminate 50 per cent of Asia's biodiversity, including 88 per cent of its reefs, over the next 30 years. As many as 1,522 plant species in China and 2,835 plants in Indo-Burma may go extinct. In the Great Mekong Sub-Region, biodiversity is disappearing faster than anywhere else on Earth. The ASEAN region, though covering only three per cent of the Earth's surface, serves as the natural habitat of up to 40 per cent of the world's plant and animal species. Yet deforestation rates in the region are at least two times higher than other tropical areas. If these rates hold, ASEAN will lose nearly three quarters of its original forest cover, and up to 42 per cent of its biodiversity by the next century.

The situation in Europe is also worrisome. While a recent 2010 progress report by the European Environmental Agency offered some welcome numbers – for example, up to 17 per cent of EU land area is now included in the Natura 2000 network and 16 per cent is protected under national instruments – it also contained gloomier statistics: up to 40–85 per cent of habitats and 40–70 per cent of species of European interest continue to have an unfavourable

conservation status, with 45 per cent of assessed marine fishery resources not being used sustainably, and some stocks still falling outside safe biological limits.

What can be done to reverse these trends? Over the years, Parties to the Convention have produced 324 decisions and Parties to Cartagena Protocol 65, which have helped generate the necessary framework for preserving biodiversity. More comprehensive implementation of this framework is now the key challenge we face at the policy level. Indeed, the enhanced phase of implementation of the Convention's strategic plan was initiated at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in Curitiba in 2006, and the enhanced phase of commitment at the ninth meeting, in Bonn in 2008. Further, biodiversity is now on the agenda at the highest political levels, with G-8 summits in Heiligendamm, Hokkaido/Toyako and L'Aquila having responded to the G-8 Environmental Ministerial Meetings' "Potsdam Initiative", "Kobe Call for Action for Biodiversity" and "Carta di Siricusa" on biodiversity. This process will continue next year, when, just before tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, Heads of State and Government attending the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly will discuss the importance of biodiversity for the first time ever.

To build on this momentum, we need to start integrating biodiversity concerns at the national level. It is essential that countries critically evaluate how global targets, indicators, and preservation guidelines apply to their particular situation. Only when countries individually set targets and develop approaches at the national, provincial and municipal level will they ensure that biodiversity can effectively be incorporated into legislative decisions. Countries that have already adopted national biodiversity strategy and action plans may need to adjust them after they go through this process.

In addition, biodiversity must be mainstreamed into a broad range of issues. As you know, biodiversity loss is interlinked with issues such as poverty, climate change, water scarcity, growth in demand, development and international conflict. Legislators must be made aware that stopping biodiversity loss is not simply a question of conserving nature but also a question of protecting human well-being. To further this process, the Secretariat recently held an expert meeting on mainstreaming biodiversity in development cooperation. An excellent opportunity for Asian and European nations to contribute to the mainstreaming of biodiversity concerns will be the 8th Asia-Europe meeting, to be held in Brussels in 2010. We look forward to working with Mr. Peter Ryan of the Asia-Europe Foundation for the preparation of this important event which will coincide with the celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity.

An important part of the mainstreaming of biodiversity loss will be connecting it to climate change. Kofi Annan and the Global Humanitarian Forum recently released a landmark report detailing the human costs of climate change, which includes an examination of the negative effects of climate change on many local ecosystems and the people that directly depend on them. Building on this report, the biodiversity community needs to make it clear to decision makers that biodiversity conservation can mitigate climate change and so help prevent human suffering. In particular, mechanisms to achieve emissions reductions through land use change are consistent with mechanisms to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity. These mechanisms include improved crop and grazing land management to increase soil carbon storage, restoration of cultivated peaty soils and degraded lands, afforestation, reforestation and reduced deforestation. Overall, appropriate land use is one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing emissions.

Our efforts will also be facilitated by the eventual development of the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services (IPBES). The CBD welcomes this platform, since with 2010 around the corner the scientific community needs to be mobilized more than ever in support of the Convention's objectives. There is a very deep need for a system that provides authoritative biodiversity science to decision makers at all levels. To be successful, this system must:

(a) Strengthen and support existing scientific bodies, such as the Convention's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, rather than competing with and weakening them;

(b) Provide policy-relevant but not policy-prescriptive advice;

(c) Have firm intergovernmental backing while ensuring the independence of the scientists involved; and

(d) Combine cutting-edge, multidisciplinary science with wide representation and stakeholder involvement.

The CBD has an important role to play in the IPBES and will be one of its key partners.

Let there be no doubt that the 2010 biodiversity target has played its role in mobilizing the international community to address biodiversity loss. Though the target will not be met, it has set the stage for the development of a post-2010 agenda. In Nagoya the Parties to the Convention will be adopt an international regime on access and benefit sharing, assess progress toward the 2010 target, set a new post-2010 target, and formalize a new Strategic Plan for the Convention.

The expectations for the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties are high, and Japan has the opportunity to provide critical leadership at this important moment in history. In the future, Nagoya will be remembered as the place where the international community expressed its absolute commitment to tackling the problem of biodiversity loss in the same way that Kyoto is remembered as the place where addressing climate change became an international mandate.

As the Japanese poet Ryunosuke Satoro said: "Individually we are one drop. Together we are an ocean." It is in Nagoya that the world will look beyond 2010 and set the agenda for preserving the biological heritage of our children.

Thank you for your kind attention.