



Convention on
Biological Diversity



STATEMENT

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

ON THE OCCASION OF

LIFE INSTITUTE LAUNCHING EVENT

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Ladies and gentlemen,

We at the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity are very glad to hear of the launch of the LIFE Certification initiative. This project dovetails nicely with recent efforts to engage the private sector globally in the struggle to address an extremely serious environmental issue with profound economic and social implications – the loss of biodiversity.

We are particularly happy because the initiative brings new energy to decision VIII/17 adopted at the ninth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention, which was held in here in Curitiba in 2006. At that time, the Parties encouraged the involvement of the private sector in the achievement of the Convention's three objectives, namely: to conserve biological diversity, to promote the sustainable use of its components, and to share fairly and equitably the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. It is extremely fitting that LIFE Certification is being launched in the very same city where the decision to encourage such projects was originally made.

In 2008, at its ninth meeting, which took place in Bonn, Germany, the Conference of the Parties adopted decision IX/26, which strengthened the proposal for the involvement of the private sector in biodiversity conservation. In Bonn, we were able to witness for the first time ever a coordinated effort by the private sector to participate in debates taking place during the Conference. Based on what I have seen and heard during my several visits to Nagoya and Tokyo, I have no doubt that the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, will be a milestone in the engagement of the business community in the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention. This historic event will take place while the international community will be celebrating the International Year of Biodiversity.

It should also be noted that in Bonn the first phase of the report *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity* (TEEB), directed by Pavan Sukhdev of Deutsche Bank, was published. Once completed, this global study, financed by the European Union, will provide precise data about the costs brought about by the destruction of nature—costs that stem from the loss of biological goods such as food, lumber and medicines, and the loss of ecosystem services such as groundwater purification, replenishment of soil fertility, and crop pollination.

The first phase of the TEEB report has already given us a glimpse of some of the impressive statistics on the economic value of biological goods and ecosystem services. For example, approximately half of synthetic drugs have a natural origin, including 10 of the 25 highest selling drugs in the United States of America, while of all the anti-cancer drugs available, 42% are natural and 34% semi-natural. The value of the watershed protection provided by intact coastal ecosystems, such as mangroves and other wetlands, has been estimated at US\$ 845 per hectare per year in Malaysia and US\$ 1,022 per hectare per year in Hawaii. The value of bee pollination for coffee producers situated close to natural forests has been estimated at US\$ 361 per hectare per year.

It is information of this nature that will help convince the private sector that long-term economic dividends are ultimately connected with the preservation of biodiversity and the maintenance of ecosystem services. In the future, I am sure that the economic argument for stopping biodiversity loss will grow in importance and lead to more concrete projects such as LIFE Certification. I am sure there will be more cooperation between government and private enterprise in the fight to preserve life on Earth.

I would like to commend the vision of the Brazilian companies and institutions that are leading the construction of LIFE Certification and seeking to establish a new pattern in the relationship between business and nature. I say “vision” because this initiative was developed during a serious international economic crisis, when the whole planet has had to rethink its capacity for creation and investment. On the one hand, it would seem that a reduced flow of resources has greatly affected development opportunities and limited the creation of new ideas. On the other hand, one way to generate wealth and promote creativity is by treating our biological resources as the necessary foundation for long-term, sustainable development—wisdom implicit in the LIFE Certification proposal.

I would also like to commend the Ministry of Environment for its involvement in this initiative. By encouraging Brazilian companies to act in favour of biodiversity, the Brazilian Government not only strengthens the decisions taken at Curitiba and Bonn, but also aligns its policies with another avant-garde initiative launched at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. I refer to the ‘Business and Biodiversity’ initiative of the Government of Germany, which has brought together a group of 34 companies in Germany and other countries—Brazil among them—to seek to create a new milestone in the relationship between companies and biodiversity. I refer also to the business and biodiversity initiative launched by Keidanren (the Japanese Business Federation) as well the guidelines on business and biodiversity prepared by the Ministry of the Environment of Japan.

All these initiatives are proof of increasing synergy and cooperation among the different sectors within society. I congratulate the individuals who conceived LIFE Certification, as well as the institutions and organizations that supported its development. I would like nothing more than for it to thrive and become an internationally recognized initiative with the support of the triple presidency of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, namely that of Brazil, Germany and Japan. The tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Nagoya offers a unique opportunity for promoting LIFE Certification with the full support of all Parties to the Convention and other stakeholders.

Curitiba was the birth-place of the new enhanced phase of the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention. It was also the birth place of the Cities and Biodiversity Initiative. Now, with the launch of LIFE Certification, Curitiba will further be remembered as the birth-place of a new partnership with the business community. I would like therefore to pay tribute to the people of this great city and convey once again my deep gratitude to Mayor Carlos Richa for his leadership in advancing the biodiversity agenda in Curitiba and in the rest of the world.

Thank you for your kind attention.