



Convention on  
Biological Diversity



## **STATEMENT**

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

**ON THE OCCASION OF**

**THE THIRD WORLD CLIMATE CONFERENCE**

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Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite the impressive technological advances we have made and the expansive infrastructure we have built, we are still often humbled by the power of nature. We still rely on biodiversity and associated ecosystem services to provide us with the basic building blocks of food, water, nutrient cycling and cultural fulfillment. And we are still impacted, every day, by the climate which is now changing at a rate never before witnessed by humankind.

This World Climate Conference is, therefore, not just about meteorology, it is about people and our environment. In short it is about our life and the lives of our children. In his keynote address to the first World Climate Conference in 1979, Robert M. White stated that “in recent years we have come to appreciate that the activities of humanity can and do affect climate”. Over the past 30 years we have come much further: we know not only that our activities affect the global climate, but also that these changes have grave repercussions for our fellow species and thus for us humans who depend so greatly on the goods and services they provide.

Climate change is emerging as the greatest threat to biodiversity. What we know is that every 1° Celsius increase in global mean temperature is placing an additional 10% of species at increased risks of extinction. We also know is that these species, and the ecosystems in which they live and which they help to regulate, are integral parts of the climate system.

We can already see the impacts of climate change as increased forest fires in the Mediterranean and reduced numbers of migratory birds in the Arctic. Local communities living on small islands are witnessing how increased ocean temperatures and ocean acidification are threatening the reefs that protect them from storms and provide them with food.

But this conference is as much about what we don't know or what we don't yet fully understand as it is about what we know. We still have very little information on how climate change will interact with other drivers of biodiversity loss. We still have limited knowledge on how changes to the climate will affect complex biological systems. We still need to understand more about the feedbacks between biodiversity loss and climate systems. We need support from the scientific community to help us identify tipping points beyond which the delicate balance between life and the physical environment will be irreversibly changed. To address these concerns, an expert group on biodiversity and climate change has been convened under the

auspices of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Their report will be submitted to the Copenhagen climate change meeting and will bring to the attention of policy makers, the intricacies of the complex relationship between biodiversity and the climate system.

Indeed, managers of biodiversity, whether they are ministers of the environment making national policy decisions or pastoralists deciding where to move their herds, need to have access to the wealth of climate information available if we are to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The new shift towards adaptive management, which considers climate change impacts on biodiversity, requires the free exchange of data in both directions. On the ground, we need to have access to localized predictions of change. In the lab we need to have access to the latest observational data gathered by those people who interact with the oceans, the land and the atmosphere on a daily basis.

The theme of this conference – better climate information for a better future – can be embraced by the Convention on Biological Diversity. Next year, we will celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity with efforts around the world to build a better future through the better management of biodiversity. The high-level meeting to be held in New York on 20 September 2010 during the sixty-fifth session of United Nations General Assembly with the participation of Heads of State and Government offers a unique opportunity to put the links between climate change and biodiversity on the agenda of the leaders of the world. In 2010 we will also assess the progress we have made toward slowing biodiversity loss worldwide and formalize a post-2010 strategy at the tenth meeting of our Conference of the Parties in Nagoya, Japan. However, we cannot move forward to our next, post-2010 target without a full understanding of the challenges that we will be facing and without the information tools to tackle them.

I therefore extend my thanks to all of you who are working here to build better information and to share it with the world. I wish you the best during this conference and look forward to seeing the realization of the vision of science-based climate predictions and information linked to the management of climate-related risks and opportunities.

Thank you for your kind attention.