



Convention on
Biological Diversity



STATEMENT

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

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

**HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE: VISIONS FOR BIODIVERSITY
BEYOND 2010:
PEOPLE, ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

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The Swedish statesman Dag Hammarskjöld, second Secretary-General of the United Nations Organisation, winner of Nobel Peace Prize and the person whom John F. Kennedy called “the greatest statesman of our century”, once said the following: “Only he who keeps his eye fixed on the far horizon will find the right road.”

This vision has always and consistently inspired and guided the environmental agenda of the people and the government of Sweden both at national and international level. 37th year after the first United Nations Conference on Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972; ninth year after the First Global Ministerial Environmental Forum of UNEP held in May 2000 in Malmo; eight year after Goteberg which provides to the world the vision for the 2010 Biodiversity target here we are today in Stromstad under the Swedish presidency of the European Union to shape the vision of the biodiversity global vision beyond 2010. . It was indeed in Göteborg in 2001 that EU heads of state committed themselves to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010, making this a headline objective in the European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development.

I would like therefore to ask HEM Andreas Garlgreen , the Minister of the Environment to convey to the Swedish people and authorities including the local authorities and in particular the Chairman of the City Council in Stromstad our deep appreciation for the unique contribution of Sweden in leading by example.

Excellencies

At the 1972 Stockholm conference, Indira Gandhi the then Prime Minister of India asked the question “Are not poverty and need the greatest polluters?” Mrs. Gandhi pointed out that poverty is major cause and consequences of environmental degradation . In 1987 Mrs Gro Harlem Brundtland who stated “you cannot tackle hunger, disease, and poverty unless you can also provide people with a healthy ecosystem in which their economies can grow.”

Today Mr Pavan Sukhdev , a citizen of India is providing a comprehensive response to the question raised by Indira Ghandi demonstrating that biodiversity loss affects not only the poor but all of us without exception. The loss of biodiversity is not only an environmental and ecological crisis, it is also an economic, financial, social and societal crisis. I would like therefore to thank Mr Pavan Sukhdev for his unique contribution in making the economic case of biodiversity and in putting the biodiversity agenda at the heart of the development processes. I would like to thank Germany and the European Commission for this initiative.

It is not only fitting to be here in Stromstad under the Swedish presidency but is also very appropriate that this session is being moderated by her Excellency minister Espinosa the Minister of one of the richest country in Europe in terms of biodiversity , a great supporter of the CBD’ agenda and the incoming president for 2010 of the EU together with Belgium the host of the European Commission. The triple EU presidency is indeed a key mechanism for the success of the 2010 global biodiversity agenda .

2010 will be a crucial year for the biodiversity family. It will not only coincide with the end of the agreed time frame for the implementation of the Johannesburg biodiversity target but also the adoption of the post 2010 biodiversity target including a new strategic plan of the Convention to be adopted at Nagoya Biodiversity Summit to be held in October 2010 in Japan.

COP10 in Nagoya will have also to adopt an international regime on access and benefit sharing . 2010 will mark also the celebration of the International Year on Biodiversity which will coincide also with the convening in September 2010 in New York with the convening in the first time in the history of the UN of a high level segment of the United Nations General Assembly on “Biodiversity challenges and responses” with the participation of head of State and Government.

In opening the 1972 Stockholm conference, its Secretary-General Maurice Strong said “we do not have to believe in the inevitability of environmental catastrophe to accept the possibility of such a catastrophe.” It is in this spirit that the 2010 Target was created. Parties to the CBD recognized the very real possibility that humans could fatally degrade the web of life that sustains us. But they also recognized that this possibility could be avoided through concerted and committed action.

All of this remains true today. The possibility of a biological catastrophe in the decades to come is still very real. Biodiversity continue to be lost at unprecedented rate. 60 per cent of the Earth’s ecosystem services have been degraded in the last 50 years, The lost of biodiversity may be 1000 times higher than the natural background rate of extinction. Climate change is not a major root cause of the lost of biodiversity . According to IPCC up to 30% of all know species may disappear before the end of this century owing to climate change.

Even, here in Europe the situation also continues to be worrisome. According to the European Environmental Agency, 40–85 per cent of habitats and 40–70 per cent of species of European interest continue to have an unfavourable conservation status. The High level Conference on Biodiversity convened in April this year by the European Commission recognized that the 2010 target will not be met . This is also the case of the rest of the world as evidenced by the 78 national report that have been so far submitted to the secretariat on the implementation of the 2010 targets and we urge all the remaining countries, including the 17 European countries that have not yet submitted their national report to do so as soon as possible. .These reports are key to the success of the 2010 biodiversity agenda and the finalisation of the third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook in May 2010..

The second edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook indicated in 2006 that the policies developed under the CBD are sufficient to meet the 2010 biodiversity target. Why, then, have we failed both here in Europe and worldwide? Let me quote from the Malmö declaration:

“There is an alarming discrepancy between commitments and action. Goals and targets agreed by the international community in relation to sustainable development...must be implemented in a timely fashion. The mobilization of domestic and international resources, including development assistance, far beyond current levels is vital to the success of this Endeavour.”

Although these words were stated by the world’s environment ministers in 2000, they apply just as well today. The 2008 European Union biodiversity Action Plan mid term review found that the speed and scale of biodiversity loss mean that much tougher action is needed and urgently. It is indeed this sense of urgency is underpinning the 2010 global biodiversity agenda . In meeting collectively and individually the biodiversity challenges let us be inspired by the wisdom of Dag Hammarskjöld who said: “Never measure the height of a mountain until you have reached the top. Then you will see how low it was.”. Let us also be guided by the spirit of the late Kjell Larsson the former Minister of the Environment of Sweden and the chair of the Memo meeting who stated that “ Sustainable development is a question of

survival to be accorded even greater importance than traditional security policy. We know what has to be done. It is time to do it” . We should keep these words in mind as we celebrate together as a family of nations the United Nations International year on Biodiversity and I am very pleased to unveil for the first time here in Stromstad the official logo of this unique event in the history of the Convention on Life on Earth and its partners. I am very pleased that this ceremony is taking place with the participation of the Bureau of COP9 under the able leadership of Germany. I urge all of you to seize the moment and provide leadership and lead by example. We owe it to yourself, to your children and to the World.

Thank you for your kind attention.