



Statement

by

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BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

on the occasion of the

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Life in harmony, into the future

Ambassador Yong. What a pleasure to be back to Singapore. Here we are again in Singapore, for another contribution of the “The Garden City”, for advancing the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Here we are at the Republic Polytechnic, which is preparing the new leaders of Singapore, connected to the need of the Singapore economy but also to its natural heritage as the 10,000 students have open access to a seven-hectare natural park.

Last month, Singapore was the host of a very successful workshop on forests under the Convention on Biological Diversity. Early this year, Singapore hosted an innovative technical meeting which developed the Singapore Urban Biodiversity Index. It will be discussed and adopted at the Aichi-Nagoya Biodiversity City Summit and submitted to the high level segment of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Last year, in June, during the World City Summit, which was convened under the patronage of his Excellency the Prime Minister of Singapore, a significant contribution was made in promoting the CBD initiative on cities and biodiversity. In January last year, Singapore hosted a capacity-building workshop for Asia on NBSAPs and I had the immense privilege of addressing the Annual Singapore Lecture on the issue of climate change and biodiversity.

At each of my visit here in Singapore I am always reminded of the statement made in 2006 by Klaus Töpfer, then Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), who stated, as he selected this country as the host of the Champions of the Earth Awards that “Singapore has become an inspiration for other nations striving to achieve the goal of sustainable development”. I am also reminded of the wisdom of Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew who stated “Greening Singapore has been good for our people, for our business and for our region... Our example has inspired our neighbours who have tried to out-green and out-bloom each other. Greening is a positive competition that benefits every one, good for morale, tourism and business.”

Indeed, “Singa Pura -the Lion City- a country that has included nature as a national symbol has so much to share and to give to the rest of the region and to the world. Nature is part of the national heritage of the people of this great nation. Let me therefore pay tribute to the people and Government of Singapore for this unique contribution to advancing the biodiversity agenda and I would like to convey to Singapore people and Government my deep gratitude for their personal contribution.

While attending the Singapore capacity-building workshop in January 2008, I had the immense privilege of signing, with my friend Mr. Fuentes, an MOU with the Asian Centre for Biodiversity. I would like to congratulate the ACB and the Government of the Philippines for the recent adoption of the host agreement by the senate which will contribute to the enhanced collaboration between the Secretariat and its collaborative centre in Asia at the time where more than ever we need to step up our efforts to meeting the unprecedented challenge we are facing, due to the rapid lost of biodiversity compounded by climate change. Our meeting today is the largest biodiversity conference organized by ACB and its partners under such a relevant theme as: “Biodiversity in Focus: 2010 and Beyond”.

Last week, while visiting the offices established for the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in the Ministry of Environment of Japan, I saw the Aichi-Nagoya countdown clock. We now have only 362 days left before the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and 70 days left before 2010. Last month, at the European Union meeting on Vision beyond 2010, held in Strömstad, Sweden, the Europeans Ministers reaffirmed the conclusion of the Athens Message adopted in April that 2010 biodiversity target will not be met in spite of significant efforts. The same conclusion is emerging from the review of the 80 fourth national reports that the Secretariat as received so far. The Secretariat would like to urge all the Governments attending the meeting and that have not yet done so to submit, as soon as possible, their national report on the implementation of the 2010 biodiversity target no later than by the end of November this year, even as a draft or a preliminary report.

Indeed, biodiversity continues to be lost at unprecedented rate. The situation here in Southeast Asia is just as troubling. 80 per cent of Southeast Asia’s coral reefs are at risk due to destructive fishing practices and coral bleaching. Over 45 per cent of protected wetlands are considered threatened. Despite occupying

only three per cent of the Earth's total surface, Southeast Asia is home to 20 per cent of all known plant and animal species. Forests cover 45 per cent of the ASEAN region. However, during the last decade, more than 10 millions hectares of forests were lost in forest fire. If the current rate of deforestation is allowed to continue, three quarters of the forests of the region will disappear and 42 per cent of its biodiversity will be lost by the end of the century.

What are the consequences of continued biodiversity loss? As you know, poor people are likely to be hit the hardest. 1.6 billion people in the world draw their livelihood from forests and forests related products. However 13 millions hectares are being lost annually. 1 billion people depend on fish as their sole or main source of animal protein, while fish provided more than 2.6 billion people with at least 20 percent of their average per capita animal protein intake. Coral reefs provide food and livelihood for most of the estimated 30 million small-scale fishers in the developing world. Here in Southeast Asia the loss of biodiversity may affect 500 million by the end of the century.

That is why, since last year, the Convention initiated the "biodiversity for development and poverty alleviation" initiative with the support of AfD, GTZ and UNDP and JICA. As a result, the 2010 International Day for Biodiversity will be celebrated worldwide on 22 May under the theme "Biodiversity for Development and Poverty Alleviation". The Heads of State and Government attending the high-level meeting during the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly on 20 September will also discuss this issue as a contribution to the ten-year review of the Millennium Development Goals. The first meeting on Biodiversity in Development Cooperation will be held at the level of heads of agencies, in cooperation with JICA, on 26 October 2010, just prior to the high-level segment of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Biodiversity loss is strongly linked not only to poverty, but also to climate change. Deforestation is currently estimated to be responsible for 20 per cent of annual human-induced CO₂ emissions, as forests account for as much as 80 per cent of the total above-ground terrestrial carbon. Further, peatlands, which cover only 3 per cent of the world's terrestrial surface, store 30 per cent of the carbon contained in both terrestrial vegetation and soils.

The fact that biodiversity loss can worsen the effects of climate change is well documented. This relationship is nowhere more obvious than when it comes to natural disasters. The recent suffering and disaster which affected the people of this region is a reminder that business as usual is no more in option. Typhoon Ketsana submerged 80 per cent of the capital city of the Philippines, hitting also Viet Nam and Cambodia. This disaster confirmed the finding of the Economic and Social Survey for Asia and Pacific issued recently by ESCAP. Natural disasters, often associated with climate change stresses and lower tolerance to increased heat in lower latitudes of this region, struck with intensity in 2008. The number of deaths in Asia and the Pacific in 2008 reached 232,500 persons, accounting for a staggering 97.5% of such fatalities worldwide.

It is why by adopting their Declaration on Environmental Sustainability, here in Singapore in November 2007, ASEAN leaders recognized the unique contribution of biodiversity in meeting climate-related challenges. Southeast Asian nations also demonstrated environmental leadership at the tenth ASEAN Summit in Vientiane in 2004. In creating their 2004-2010 joint six-year plan – the Vientiane Action Programme – they included a section on promoting environmental sustainability. In this section they outlined steps for developing "a clean and green ASEAN with fully established mechanisms for sustainable development to ensure the protection of the regional environment, the sustainability of its natural resources and the high quality of life of its people."

Business as usual is no longer an option. As we heard, we must learn from the past and avoid repeating mistakes and another failure.

2010 will provide a unique opportunity for Asia to provide leadership in showing the way ahead to meet the biodiversity challenges. 2010 will coincide with the celebration of the International Year of

Biodiversity and I am very pleased to present to you the official logo of this unique event, which will also coincide with a Summit of Heads of State and Government exclusively devoted to biodiversity on 20 September 2010 on the occasion of the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. It will also coincide with the next summit of ASEAN as well as another great event in Asia: Japan will host the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Aichi/Nagoya. Japan will also host the next meeting of the Asia-Pacific Summit. Last week in Tokyo, Mr. Sakihito Ozawa, the Minister of Environment of Japan unveiled the official logo for COP10. In Aichi/Nagoya a Pre-COP10 Festival was convened with the participation of more than 18,000 citizens. A meeting of the Japan Civil Society network for the Convention on Biological Diversity was convened with the participation of more than 200 experts. The Kobe Biodiversity Dialogue 2009 was held with the participation of more than 300 participants. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to request Mr. Hoshino to convey my gratitude to the People and Government of Japan for the outstanding demonstration of Japan's leadership.

The Aichi-Nagoya biodiversity summit will be phenomenal. The expected 10,000 participants will not only assess progress achieved for implementing the 2010 biodiversity target but most importantly adopt a 2020 and 2050 new biodiversity target incorporated in a new Strategic Plan of the Convention for 2011-2020, as well as an international regime on access and benefit sharing, which will make a significant contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties will be phenomenal not just for the content of its expected outputs but also and most importantly for its inclusive and all encompassing approach based and inspired by the tradition and culture of the host country and guided by the "Japanese Way". The post-2010 biodiversity target will not follow a top-down approach. It will be designed, prepared, adopted and implemented by all stakeholders.

I would like to thank Japan for its leadership as demonstrated by its draft contribution for the post-2010 period submitted last month in Strömstad, Sweden, at the most recent meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties and expected to be finalized by the end of this year well before the Asian workshop on the post-2010 period, to be held in Tokyo in December.

Next month in Montreal, a joint meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties and the Bureau of the scientific body of the Convention, the second of its kind, will be convened to discuss the first draft of the revised Strategic Plan. The new Strategic Plan will integrate the post-2010 target. It will draw upon the fourth national reports submitted by Parties, and we hope to have a 100 per cent rate of submission before the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. It will also build on the third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook. The draft new Strategic Plan will be submitted to regional consultations to be held in Tokyo, Nairobi and Panama. It will be made available to the meeting of the European Union in Madrid in January and serve as a basis of discussion at the Global Conference on 2010 to be held in London and organized jointly by the United Kingdom and Brazil. It will be submitted to the sixth Trondheim International Conference on Biodiversity and reviewed by the scientific organ and the implementation organ of the Convention when they will meet in Nairobi, in May 2010. The GBO-3 will be launched in Nairobi on 10 May but also simultaneously in Tokyo, Bangkok, Berlin, Paris, London, New York, Washington and other major United Nations cities.

The Nairobi meetings will coincide with *The Green Wave* campaign, aimed at engaging, on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity, the children of today, the citizens and the leaders of tomorrow in the fight to protect life on Earth and be the actor of their own future. The International Day for Biological Diversity will be celebrated on 22 May 2010 under the theme "Biodiversity for development and poverty alleviation" as a contribution to the 10-year review by Heads of State and Government of the Millennium Development Goals, including goal 7 on environmental sustainability which since 2006 includes "the 2010 biodiversity target".

We should seize the moment and 2010 is the moment to seize. The challenge we face during the International Year of Biodiversity and the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Nagoya is to develop innovative, long-term solutions to the biodiversity crisis. As we engage in this task, we should keep in mind the words of Prof. Tommy Koh, Ambassador-at-Large at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Director of the Institute of Policy Studies and Chairman of the National Heritage Board in Singapore:

“In the final analysis, the goal of sustainable development cannot be achieved by Government, business, experts, international organizations and NGOs alone. We have to win the hearts and minds of the citizens of the world. We have to inculcate in every child a love of nature. We have to influence the daily habits and lifestyles of peoples all over the world. We should aim to persuade every consumer in every country to internalize the ethic of ‘reduce, re-use and recycle’.”

Southeast Asia has a crucial role to play on the international stage in the months and years to come. Lee Kuan Yew said that: “The time has come for Asia's Governments, business leaders, NGOs...to forge partnerships to tackle Asia's most pressing concern, the environment - a global concern.” There is no time to waste. We have reached a critical point in human history: what we do in the next few years – or what we fail to do – will determine the quality of life for people everywhere for generations to come.

I sincerely hope that the response of Minister Grace Fu to her three year old son Justin Lee will guide you and inspire you during the three coming days and we will inspire and guide the expected 10,000 participants to the Aichi/Nagoya biodiversity summit.

Thank you for your kind attention.