



STATEMENT

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

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE UNCTAD EVENT

ON

**REDEFINING SUSTAINABILITY IN THE INTERNATIONAL
AGENDA: INSPIRING GREATER ENGAGEMENT IN
BIODIVERSITY ISSUES**

Geneva, 20 January 2010

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Life in harmony, into the future
いのちの共生を、未来へ
COP 10 / MOP 5

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One hundred years ago, Jean Henri Dunant, the founder of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the first recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, passed away. A native son of Geneva, his work and ideas were the original driving force behind the creation of the Geneva Conventions, which remain so central to our contemporary vision of human dignity and rights. Through Dunant and like-minded spirits, Geneva was birth place of some of the central pillars of the modern humanitarian ideal. The dramatic impacts of the unprecedented loss of biodiversity compounded by climate change will become more and more at the core of the humanitarian assistance.

In accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in December 2004, Prof. Wangari Maathai stated that, “There can be no peace without equitable development and there can be no development without sustainable management of the environment in a democratic and peaceful space. I hope that this prize will help many people see the link between peace, development and environment.” I would like to add there will be no peace without a culture of peace in the mind of humanity and without respect to mother nature.

It is therefore fitting that, here in Geneva, we should honour the spirit of Jean Henri Dunant by preventing future humanitarian disaster owing to the rapid loss of the world’s biodiversity. The simple fact is that the world is facing an unprecedented loss of biodiversity compounded by climate change. Extinction rates have been estimated as much as 1,000 times higher than the typical natural rates over the Earth’s history. Every hour, four species are lost. Every minute, 20 hectares of forests disappear; every year, 13 million hectares are destroyed—an area four times the size of Belgium. Although they represent only 7 per cent of the world’s surface, tropical forests currently house 50 to 70 per cent of identified living species. They are also the richest areas in cultural biodiversity, with 1,400 to 2,500 different indigenous populations representing 54 per cent of the world’s ecoregions and 36 per cent of the total number of ethno-linguistic groups

Forty-six years ago, UNCTAD was born here in Geneva. Let me quote Raúl Prebisch, who said, “A new rationality must be sought, but not one based on hegemonic interests; rather, one based not merely on economic and social objectives but on eminently ethical ones.”

Aldo Leopold, considered to be one of the founding fathers of environmental ethics and conservation in the United States, pointed out that, “We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect”.

This is indeed this new ethic of living in harmony with nature that underpins the Jakarta Declaration on Business and Biodiversity adopted in December last year and the CBD Business and Biodiversity Initiative to be adopted at the Aichi-Nagoya Biodiversity Summit to be held in Japan in October this year. This initiative, which will culminate with a dialogue between the chief executive officers of companies and ministers on 28 October on the occasion of Messe Nagoya, will combine the various initiatives of the Triple Presidency of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity: the Life Certification Scheme launched in July last year by Brazil, the German Leadership Declaration, and the Nippon Keidanren Declaration, as well as the Business and Biodiversity Guidelines developed by the Ministry of Environment of Japan in partnership with the business community and other stakeholders. The participants will have before them the results of the Aveda initiative launched in Bonn in May 2008 at the ninth meeting

of the Conference of the Parties aimed at demonstrating, in partnership with indigenous and local community, that sustainable ethical business practices, including equitable benefit-sharing are good for everyone and good for the environment as well as for the future of mankind.

As an Irish rock musician said, “Shopping is political, because you vote every time you spend money.” It is the same principle that inspired Green2greener, an environmentally focused Hong Kong charity, which aims at helping the fashion industry to become a leader in developing a new green culture by connecting couture designers with eco-textile suppliers. Indeed G2G aims at promoting the best sustainable fashion labels to a wider audience. Since 2008, over 80 fashion designers from around the world have participated in EcoChic fashion shows and exhibition.

Let me therefore commend the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and his team as well as Green2greener for this initiative and for organizing this event on business and biodiversity at the start of the International Year of Biodiversity.

During the celebration of this historical event, let us all be inspired and guided by the wisdom of Raúl Prebisch, who said, “It is essential that some day all of us, those of the North and those of the South together, set ourselves to explore the nature of our problems, discarding dogmas and preconceived ideas, until we reach a measure of common ground.”

Indeed, biodiversity is life; biodiversity is our life.

Thank you for your kind attention.
