



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

STATEMENT

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

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE LAUNCH OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
BIODIVERSITY
AT THE
2010 DELHI SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT**

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

Distinguished delegates,

As we launch the International Year of Biodiversity 2010 today here in New Delhi, I am reminded of Gandhi's famous words: "The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problem." Utilizing our capability to solve the unprecedented biodiversity crisis is precisely what the International Year is about. Throughout the year and beyond, the nations of the world will engage in an unprecedented celebration to mobilise their civil society in the battle to protect the diversity of life on Earth, paying homage to incredible biological richness that sustains our health and wellbeing and, ultimately, allows for our very existence.

India ranks among the top ten species-rich nations with a matching traditional knowledge to make use of this biological diversity which continues to evolve in natural conditions. But, the country is rapidly losing this priceless treasure similar to global trends, due to ignorance of its value. Globally, the world has only about 73% of the biological diversity left from its original levels.

According to the national report filed in May 2009 by the Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests the threat to biodiversity stems mainly from habitat change, shrinking genetic diversity, invasive alien species, a declining forest resource base and climate change. With most of the land in the country under agriculture and forestry, a focus on land use policies in these two sectors is considered a priority for maintaining biodiversity.

For example, a major impact of development activities involves diversion of forest land. Since the enactment of Forest (Conservation) Act in 1980, 1.14 million hectares of forest area, for about 14,997 development projects, has been approved for diversion. Such conversion is done on the assumption that the alternate use of forest land will provide better economic returns to society. This is not always true. For example the conversion of mangroves to shrimp farming yields about US\$ 200 per hectare. However, intact mangroves provide the bare necessities for coastal inhabitants as well as carbon sequestration services and protection from storms amounting to a minimum of US\$ 1,000 per hectare and up to as much as US\$ 36,000 per hectare.

The loss of biodiversity often reduces the productivity of ecosystems, thereby shrinking nature's basket of goods and services, from which industry constantly draws. It destabilizes ecosystems, and weakens their ability to deal with natural disasters such as floods, droughts, and hurricanes, and with human-caused stresses, such as pollution and climate change. Already, the country is spending huge sums in response to flood and storm damage exacerbated by deforestation; such damage is expected to increase due to global warming.

The impact and consequences of this unprecedented loss of the ability of our planet to continue providing its goods and services that we human being take for granted is unknown to the larger audience as well as to policy makers .

It is for this reason that the United Nations General Assembly declared 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity with a view to engaging people all over the world in the fight to protect life on Earth. The goals of this unique event in the life of the Convention on Biological Diversity are to raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity, to communicate the human costs of its ongoing loss, and to get the people, and in particular youth and children, involved in efforts to conserve and sustainably use our natural heritage and to protect our lives and the lives of our children.

The official launch of the International Year of Biodiversity took place in Berlin in early January under the chairmanship of Dr. Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany, the current President of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. Brazil, the President of the Conference of the Parties at its eighth meeting marked the Year in Curitiba, Brazil. It was followed by a high-level event in Paris at UNESCO, during which a travelling global exhibition on biodiversity was launched. The Year will be marked during the sixty-fifth session of United Nations General Assembly September 2010 at a special meeting to be attended by Heads of State and Government. In its capacity as the country offering to host the conference of the Parties in 2012, India has a major role to play in the success of this unique event in the history of the Convention as well as the United Nations Organization.

COP10 in Nagoya promises to be a truly extraordinary event. In Nagoya the Parties will make a final assessment of progress toward the 2010 Biodiversity Target, create new biodiversity targets for 2020 and 2050, finalize a comprehensive post-2010 strategic plan for ultimately stopping biodiversity loss in the years to come, and establish an International Regime on Access and Benefit-Sharing. All of this will be done using a bottom-up approach, with the participation and input of a broad range of stakeholders. To this end COP10 will include a summit on Cities and Biodiversity, as well as forums for, amongst others, parliamentarians, cooperative agencies and the private sector. A high-level ministerial segment will also take place from the 27th to the 29th of October. Ultimately, a grand global alliance of all sectors of society will be formed in Nagoya, making it a truly watershed moment in the struggle to preserve the diversity of life on Earth.

There can be no doubt that the task before us this year is supremely urgent. To quote Chancellor Merkel: “The question is not whether we are able to change but whether we are changing fast enough.” These words are a true call-to-action which I hope will be the basis of IYB celebrations as well as of the 2012 conference of the Parties to be held in India.

With our sights now firmly set on Nagoya and the post-2010 world, let us also remember the words of Mahatma Gandhi: “Whatever you do may seem insignificant to you, but it is most important that you do it.” And indeed over coming months we need action by each individual human being to protect the biological resources on which our health, wellbeing and prosperity so intimately depend. “Biodiversity is life”, as the slogan of the International Year reminds us. “Biodiversity is OUR life.”

Thank you for your kind attention.