



**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 SATOYAMA/SATOUMI FORUM**

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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,

Born and raised in Kanazawa, the great Japanese thinker Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki said that life ought to be lived as a bird flies through the air, or as a fish swims in the water. Suzuki was encouraging us to live as naturally as possible, which, at a different level, is one of the themes of the International Year of Biodiversity 2010. Over the course of the next several months, the 193 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity will be developing a strategic vision of how humans can live sustainably at the heart of the dynamic ecological systems that support us – a vision, of course, that the Japanese have long had in their ancient land-management practice of Satoyama. Rural agricultural communities and villages in Japan have a centuries-old history of carefully managing the forests, grasslands, streams and ponds upon which their livelihood depends. In this time of environmental crisis, the international community has much to learn from such an enlightened culture.

As you may know, humans are currently driving species extinct at an unprecedented rate – up to 1,000 times the natural background rate. The 2009 IUCN Red List of threatened species revealed that 36 per cent of all evaluated species on the globe are threatened with extinction, including 21 per cent of mammals, 30 per cent of amphibians, 12 per cent of birds, and 28 per cent of reptiles, 37 per cent of freshwater fishes, 35 per cent of invertebrates, and a staggering 70 per cent of plants. In 2005, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment showed that approximately 60 per cent of examined ecosystem services have been degraded worldwide in the last 50 years. If current loss rates continue, it is expected that an area of 1.3 billion ha worldwide – about 1.5 times the United States – will completely lose its original biodiversity levels by 2050.

To prevent worst-case scenarios, eight years ago the Parties to the Convention set a target to significantly slow biodiversity loss worldwide by 2010, declared the International Year of Biodiversity by the UN General Assembly. And yet the Convention's upcoming third edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook will show that we have fallen short in our efforts. Despite progress in some areas, biodiversity globally is still being lost at a tremendous rate. That is why the Convention and its partners are working to learn from our successes and failures to date in order to devise a post-2010 strategic plan and post-2010 biodiversity targets, which will be finalized at our tenth Conference of the Parties in October in Nagoya, under the slogan "Life in harmony, into the future."

As I alluded to earlier, a central element of the new strategic plan will be emphasizing that humans are not outside agents attempting to preserve distant ecosystems, but are deeply dependent on biodiversity for everything that makes life as we know it possible: food, medicine, and the many other biological goods that sustain both our health and economic productivity; air purification, crop pollination, and the countless irreplaceable services provided by healthy ecosystems; and the spiritual and cultural fulfilment offered by contact with the natural world.

This perspective – the so-called ecosystem approach – received a great boost two years ago in Kobe, when G8 Environment Ministers issued a call to action and put forward Satoyama as a model of how humans should live in and interact with nature. The Kobe Call to Action gave birth to the SATOYAMA Initiative, a Japanese-led project to promote Satoyama-like practices internationally. The initiative gained impetus at the Convention's ninth meeting in Bonn, Germany, and at international Satoyama forums held in Japan in September 2008 and March 2009. Your forum today in Kanazawa is another step toward spreading the wisdom embodied by Satoyama both more broadly in Japan and throughout the rest of the world. The Director General

of the Japanese Ministry of the Environment once told me that the Satoyama model can contribute highly towards achieving coexistence between Man and Nature. I agree with him strongly. Allow me therefore to thank UNU's Advanced Studies Operating Unit Ishikawa / Kanazawa, and the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature, for organizing this important and timely event.

Let me also thank the Forests Culture Association and its founding organization, the Asahi Shinbun, for collaborating with the Ministry of the Environment and the Forestry Agency to strengthen the Green Wave Campaign in Japan. I could not have been more pleased to hear of your plans to have 100,000 trees planted throughout the Japanese archipelago on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, the International Day for Biodiversity. Getting youth involved in biodiversity conservation is deeply important, as they are tomorrow's policymakers – and with the right education and exposure, tomorrow's champions of Satoyama.

I look forward to progress reports on the SATOYAMA Initiative at the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Convention's scientific body in Nairobi in May, as well as at COP-10 in Nagoya. Let me take this opportunity to ask all of you gathered at today's forum to promote Satoyama and Satoyama-type practices whenever you can. A particularly important moment when the ecosystem approach must receive attention is during the 65<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly of the United Nations this September in New York, when a high-level segment on biodiversity with the participation of heads of state and government will be convened for the first time ever. By keeping Satoyama and the ecosystem approach at the heart of our deliberations over the course of the year, we will ultimately ensure that the theme of integrating humans into nature takes centre stage at COP-10 in Nagoya, when an unprecedented range of stakeholders – from youth to local authorities to the private sector – will gather to shape our post-2010 agenda.

“Follow nature and return to nature”, advised the celebrated Japanese poet Matsuo Basho. I am sure that we will see this wisdom on display in ten months time when Kanazawa hosts the closing ceremony of the International Year of Biodiversity 2010, helping to ensure a smooth transition into the International Year of Forests 2011. I look forward to celebrating with you on that important occasion, and hope we will all keep the slogan of the International Year of Biodiversity in mind far beyond it: “Biodiversity is life. Biodiversity is OUR life.”

Thank you for your kind attention.