



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

STATEMENT

ON

THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR ON BIODIVERSITY

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ON THE OCCASION OF

**INFORMATION SESSION WITH THE CANADIAN
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COP 10 / MOP 5

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

What an honour to address today the diplomatic corps accredited in the capital of the host country of the Convention on Biological Diversity! What a privilege to do so here in this prestigious institution! The entrance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Canada remind us of the wisdom of that remarkable Canadian citizen, the Nobel Peace Laureate Lester B Pearson, who said: “Threats to global survival, though they are sometimes exaggerated in apocalyptic language which makes our flesh creep, are real. The prophets of doom and gloom may be proven wrong but it is a chilling fact that man can now destroy his world by nuclear explosion or ecological erosion.”

This wisdom reminds us of the unique contribution of the Canadian people to the promotion of the global environmental agenda, as well as the unique relation that prevails between the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its host, the people of Canada in their diversity.

In 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity, or CBD, was opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. The CBD was the first legally binding international treaty to comprehensively cover all aspects of biodiversity—genes, species and ecosystems—and was created in response to the increasing pressures that humans were placing on life on Earth. It has three main objectives: the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.

Last December, in order to mark the 20th anniversary of the first Earth Summit, the United Nations General Assembly decided to convene in June 2012 a world summit on sustainable development in Rio. In my capacity as General Rapporteur, I had the immense pleasure of working for two years with Mr. Maurice Strong, the Secretary-General of the Rio Earth Summit, that great son of Canada to whom the international community is forever indebted.

At the closing ceremonies of the Rio Earth Summit, M. Strong summed up the proceedings as follows: “The carrying capacity of our Earth can only sustain present and future generations if it is matched by the caring capacity of its people and its leaders. We must bring our species under control, for our own survival, for that of all life on our precious planet...Our experience in Rio has been as historic and exhilarating as the road that brought us here. The road from Rio will be long, exciting, challenging. It will open a whole new era of promise and opportunity for our species if we change direction; but only if we start now.”

As we prepare to celebrate Rio+20, we must ask ourselves the following questions: Have we changed directions? 18 years after Rio, are we ready to do so? Can we still afford to put off measures that today are more urgently needed than ever? Even if we hesitate to admit it, I think we all know the answer. As underlined by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon, putting off critical decisions until later is no longer an option for humanity.

As Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper stated at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, in Bonn in 2008, “Protecting biodiversity is one of the paramount environmental challenges facing the world today.”

And yet, the upcoming third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-3), to be released on 10 May, will show that today biodiversity continues to be lost at an unprecedented rate, threatening the capacity of our planet to continue providing the biological goods and

ecosystem services that we, *Homo urbanus*, depend on so greatly and yet take for granted. GBO-3 draws not only from the scientific literature, but also from the 120 national reports we have thus far received from our Parties, including Canada. It confirms the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment: approximately 60 per cent of examined ecosystem services have been degraded worldwide in the last 50 years, and we continue to lose species at up to 1,000 times the natural background rate.

It also confirms the findings of last year's IUCN Red List, which 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 fish, 35 per cent of invertebrates, and a staggering 70 per cent of plants. At this rate, an area of 1.3 billion hectares worldwide—about one and a half times the size of the United States—will completely lose its original biodiversity levels by 2050.

Not a single country or ecosystem remains unaffected. According to the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEPAC), 13 species have already disappeared in this country and a further 572 are listed as “threatened with extinction”.

It is for all of these reasons that the experts at the Museum of Natural History in Paris predict that we are on the brink of sixth global mass extinction of species, and the first to be caused by you and me, one species amongst millions. In fact they use the term “Anthropocene” to designate the current geologic era, during which the activities of humans have become a geo-physical force capable of altering or even destroying the planet through their influence on the equilibrium of the biosphere.

GBO-3 also shows that climate change is currently one of the major causes of the accelerated erosion of life on Earth, as reported by 89 per cent of national reports under the Convention on Biological Diversity. The report on climate change and biodiversity submitted by the Secretariat to the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit shows that approximately 10 per cent of species assessed so far have an increasingly high risk of extinction for every 1°C rise in global mean surface temperature, a trend that continues up to a 5°C increase. This means that the Copenhagen Accord, which aims to limit the rise in global temperature to two degrees Celsius by 2050, will increase the risk of extinction of 20 per cent of known species. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts that 30 per cent of known species will disappear by the end of the century because of climate change.

Observed changes in the global climate have already produced alterations in species distribution and population size, timing of reproduction or migration events, and an increased frequency of pest and disease outbreaks. Climate change has also been implicated in widespread coral bleaching, wetland salinization and salt-water intrusion, the expansion of arid and semi-arid lands at the expense of grasslands and acacia, poleward and upward shifts in habitats, replacement of tropical forests with savannah, and the shifting of desert dunes.

However, if climate change represents a problem, biodiversity is also a part of the solution. Deforestation is currently estimated to be responsible for 20 per cent of annual human-induced carbon dioxide emissions. 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. Hence, if we do not protect our forests and peatlands—and a staggering 13 million hectares of forest are currently being lost each year—significant quantities of additional carbon will continue to enter the atmosphere. Indeed, the potential for reduced emissions and increased

carbon sequestration associated with better land-management techniques has been estimated at one to six billion tonnes of carbon dioxide per year.

Biologists from the University of Stanford in California have stated that “the future of biodiversity for the 10 million of years to come will be determined in the fifty to one hundred years to come by the activities of one single species: *Homo sapiens*”. They have therefore called for a profound change in our attitudes toward nature, stating that “the idea that the economic growth is delinked from the health of our planet and that mankind can expand the world economy forever is a dangerous illusion”.

This dangerous illusion is being exacerbated by a dangerous ignorance. A Eurobarometer survey showed that 66 per cent of Europeans either had not heard of the term biodiversity or did not know what it means. A similar survey in France produced comparable results. This dangerous ignorance is also evident in our children. A survey carried out last September by Airbus as part of the Secretariat’s *The Green Wave* initiative on 1,500 schoolchildren in the United Kingdom showed that 30 per cent of them could not properly identify a creature as common as a bee—more than a third mistook it for a wasp, and some even confused it with a fly. Similar studies in Quebec have found that children between the ages of 3 and 12 spend only 1-6 per cent of their time playing outdoors, and can more easily identify company logos than name the animals, plants and insects they find outside.

It is in order to put an end to this dangerous illusion and ignorance with regard to nature—as much on the part of policymakers as the public at large—that the United Nations General Assembly declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity. The declaration of this event should not be seen as an end in itself, but as being in the service of a greater cause, as the instrument for implementing a strategic objective.

In 2002 the 110 Heads of State and Government attending the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development agreed to substantially reduce the rate of biodiversity loss worldwide by 2010. A year earlier, the 27 leaders of the European Union committed to stopping biodiversity loss in Europe by 2010. These commitments were confirmed by the 154 Heads of State and Government attending the 2005 World Review Summit, and the incorporated in 2006 into the Millennium Development Goals. The 2010 biodiversity target was subsequently reaffirmed by G8 leaders at summits in Heiligendamm, Hokkaido and Aquila.

And yet, as I alluded to earlier, our upcoming report on the global state of biodiversity will show that 2010 target has not been met. The Strömstad meeting of the European Union held last September confirmed that the European Union will not meet its 2010 biodiversity target. A similar conclusion was reached at the Kobe Biodiversity Dialogue in Japan as well as at the First ASEAN Biodiversity Conference held in Singapore in October last year.

To allow the leaders of this world to increase their engagement toward life on Earth and start creating a new way forward, as part of the celebrations of the International Year of Biodiversity the United Nations General Assembly will this September for the first time ever convene a high-level meeting on biodiversity with the participation of Heads of State and Government.

The overall objective of the International Year of Biodiversity is to mobilize all sectors of society in the fight to preserve our biological resources. Biodiversity loss can no longer be treated as a stand-alone issue, as it is interlinked with such as issues as poverty, climate change, water scarcity, economic productivity, sustainable development and international conflict, among

others. Biodiversity preservation must be mainstreamed into all sectors of society: organizations not typically concerned with doing so need to see that it is actually essential for achieving their goals.

At the official launch of the International Year in Berlin in early January, German Chancellor Angela Merkel stated: “The conservation of biological diversity has the same dimension as climate protection. We need a trend reversal - not at some point in the future, but immediately”. As the slogan of the International Year reminds us: Biodiversity is life...biodiversity is OUR life.

I am glad to say that the International Year of Biodiversity is already unfolding in this spirit. The Year was officially launched in early January in Berlin under the chairmanship of the Chancellor Merkel. Regional launches have also taken place in Curitiba, Paris, London, Nagoya, Madrid, New York, Beijing, New Delhi and Tokyo. In December, the Year will be officially closed in Kanazawa, Japan.

Just after the New York Biodiversity Summit and before the closing ceremonies of the International Year, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP10) will take place in Nagoya, Japan. In Nagoya, our 193 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 of a broad range of stakeholders, including youth, indigenous and local authorities, mayors, parliamentarians, the private sector, and development cooperative agencies.

Albert Einstein rightly said that “we can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them”. That is the wisdom guiding the preparation of the new Strategic Plan. As of today, over 50 contributions have been made to this process, and I thank Canada in particular for its contribution.

An analysis and synthesis of views, drawing upon submissions from Parties and observers, as well as informal consultations, was prepared by the Secretariat and made available in June 2009, after which it was updated to reflect both further submissions received and views expressed in recent informal consultations. An initial draft of the Strategic Plan was submitted to a special joint meeting of the bureaux of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and its scientific and technical body, SBSTTA, held in Montreal last November.

The revised draft containing the views and comments of the representatives of all the regions was submitted to a series of regional consultations, held in Tokyo, Cairo, Panama City and the Isle of Vilm, Germany. More than 16 workshops have been organized. The draft plan was also submitted for the consideration of the business community at its meeting held in Jakarta in December last year as well as to the public at large through the Aichi-Nagoya e-international biodiversity conference.

The output from these meetings was also submitted to the sixth UN/Norway Trondheim Conference on Biodiversity. The revisions to the draft Strategic Plan that emerged from Trondheim are the basis for the consideration of the new Strategic Plan and related targets and indicators by the fourteenth meeting of SBSTTA and the third meeting of the Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention, to be held in Nairobi in May.

Work thus far on the new Strategic Plan has attempted to improve on the previous plan in two key ways. The first way is by providing a mission and targets for 2020 that are both achievable and more measurable, and with a clear underlying logic consistent with the available scientific evidence, including a scientific review of biodiversity projections prepared for the third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook.

The second way is by providing a more effective framework for national implementation of the three objectives of the Convention. This framework is expected to include national targets, appropriate support mechanisms and a more robust approach to monitoring and review at both national and global levels, as well as an enhanced role for the Conference of the Parties in reviewing implementation and learning from past experience.

The post-2010 Strategic Plan is expected to include several other key components. These include drawing strong links between biodiversity, ecosystem services and human wellbeing; addressing the economic value of biodiversity and ecosystem services; making explicit the importance of biodiversity preservation for poverty eradication and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; addressing both the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, the latter including, *inter alia*, excessive consumption, for example of fossil fuels and meat, population growth, environmentally harmful subsidies, and a lack of public awareness about the harmful consequences of biodiversity loss; promoting concerted action by all by all sectors of government and society in addressing biodiversity loss; and linking such action with efforts to combat and adapt to climate change.

As we strive to implement the new Strategic Plan after 2010, cities and local authorities will be key partners. People everywhere are increasingly moving out of the countryside and into cities: more than 50 per cent of the world's population currently lives in cities, and 70 per cent will by 2030. This means that the environmental impact of cities is increasing rapidly while people are becoming more and more isolated from nature. As David Suzuki has said, "The time to address this critical issue is now. The more cities sprawl outward, the more we damage the environment and our health." That is why the CBD has actively supported the Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity, which was officially launched in 2008, and why a Cities Summit will be held during the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Nagoya.

Another key partner going into the future will be the private sector. There are many impressive statistics on the economic value of biological goods and ecosystem services. Approximately half of synthetic drugs have a natural origin, including 10 of the 25 highest-selling drugs in the United States of America. Coral-reef recreation has been estimated to be worth US\$ 184 per visit globally, US\$ 231-2,700 per hectare per year in South-East Asia and US\$ 1,654 per hectare per year in the Caribbean. Global coastal capture fisheries yields are estimated to be worth a minimum of US\$ 34 billion annually.

Such numbers are why, ever since the eight meeting of our Conference of the Parties in Curitiba in 2006, we have been actively seeking business participation in the implementation of our objectives. Our efforts are already bearing fruit. Last year a Brazilian project called "LIFE certification" was launched in Curitiba, aiming to quantify and officially recognize actions by companies related to biodiversity conservation. The ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, held in Bonn in 2008, saw the beginning of the ongoing study "The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity" (TEEB), headed by Mr. Pavan Sukhdev of Deutsche Bank, which is developing an economic framework that explicitly takes into account the value of our

biological resources. The First International Business Initiative for the Protection of Biodiversity was also started in Bonn, bringing together 34 companies to more closely involve the private sector in activities under the Convention.

Moreover, in the lead-up to the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit, Nippon Keidanren, the Japanese business federation, has launched a business and biodiversity initiative, while the Japanese Ministry of the Environment has prepared guidelines on the topic. And this past December, the Jakarta Charter on Business and Biodiversity was adopted at a meeting in Indonesia with the private sector, together with a strategy for business engagement at the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit.

Another key partner will be the Canadian people and government. After Rio, Canada was the first industrialized nation to ratify the Convention on Biological Diversity, setting a precedent for the rest of the developed world. Furthermore, the Convention Secretariat came to Montreal in 1996, and since that time we have had the full support of both the Canadian and Quebec governments. Indeed, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity is the only Rio convention secretariat to be located in North America, the other two having been established in Bonn.

At the Rio Earth Summit, then Federal Environment Minister Jean Charest stated: "In Canada, we have heard the voices from developing countries describing their most pressing needs. The relationship between poverty and degradation of the environment is evident. Addressing it needs new commitments and much greater effort. We must break the vicious downward spiral by which environmental setbacks make poor people even poorer and force them to plunder their environmental capital."

I hope that Canada's commitment to the sustainable use of biodiversity and the sustainable international development will continue during 2010. Indeed the theme of this year's International Day for Biological Diversity, to be celebrated worldwide on 22 May, is "Biodiversity, Development and Poverty Alleviation."

I am glad to say that last December we signed a memorandum of understanding with the Canadian Environmental Network, allowing us to build closer ties between with that important organization and its 600 members.

The Secretariat has also signed a memorandum of understanding with over 11 Canadian universities with the aim of mobilizing the scientific community to support the implementation of the objectives of the Convention.

Moreover, the Canadian private sector has given their key support to the preparation of the international initiative on business and biodiversity that will be submitted for adoption at the summit of chief executive officers and ministers to be held in Nagoya on 28 October this year.

All sectors of Canadian society have a role to play and responsibility to assume as the host of the Secretariat of the Convention on Life on Earth and its protocols. This is true for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety as well as the proposed international regime on access and benefit-sharing. As the host country of the Convention Secretariat, Canadian authorities have an important role to play during the elaboration, adoption and implementation of this regime, which will be truly historic in the annals of multilateral cooperation on sustainable development, and which some are already calling a major legal instrument of twenty-first century.

An opportunity for Canada to demonstrate leadership on these fronts will be the upcoming G8 and G20 summits in Ontario. Following the commitments made by G8 summits over the past three years in Heiligendamm, Hokkaido and Aquila, with a mind toward the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly this September and the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit, biodiversity must be front and centre during the deliberations of the G8 and G20 here in Canada.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In last year's edition of the CBD publication *Gincana*, Prime Minister Harper wrote the following:

“Canadians are rightfully proud of our record as conservationists and responsible stewards of nature. The challenge of balancing sustainable economic growth with a sustainable environment requires cooperation from all levels of government, industry, community organizations and all Canadians.”

I agree with him strongly. I hope that the International Year of Biodiversity will be a time when all sectors of society both here in Canada and internationally will increasingly cooperate and deliver concrete action to save life on Earth. If we do not act now, the future wellbeing of our children and grandchildren will be severely compromised.

On that note, let me leave you with these words from David Suzuki: “The human brain now holds the key to our future. We have to recall the image of the planet from outer space: a single entity in which air, water, and continents are interconnected. That is our home.”

Thank you for your kind attention.