



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

STATEMENT BY

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

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE COLLOQUIUM ON BIODIVERSITY:
EARTH'S MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE – WHY DOES IT
MATTER TO BUSINESS?**

**22 APRIL 2010
DEHRADUN, INDIA**

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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,

Today the long-term health and prosperity of humanity are under threat more than ever due to the irreversible changes we are causing to the biosphere. Species are currently disappearing at up to 1,000 times the natural background rate.

India is no exception: among the top ten species-rich nations in the world, it too is losing its biological resources at a rate similar to global trends.

The UN General Assembly declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity in order to help stop this overwhelming loss of our biological assets. In our attempt to save life on Earth, Gandhi's famous words closely capture the spirit of this year's celebrations: "The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problem."

The need to preserve biodiversity cannot be overstated. Our food, fuel and medicines, and much of our fibre and building material all have biological origins. Indeed, biological goods support such diverse industries as agriculture, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, pulp and paper, horticulture and construction.

Moreover, ecosystems provide human beings with a range of services that would be extremely costly or impossible to replace. These include the purification of air and water, the renewal of soil fertility, and the pollination of wild plants and crops.

That is why during 2010 the Convention on Biological Diversity and its partners are seeking to enlist all sectors of society, including the business community, in the fight to save life on Earth. The engagement of the private sector is particularly important, because the economic value of biodiversity has historically been overlooked.

In Phase 1 of the study 'The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity', project leader Pavan Sukhdev of Deutsche Bank wrote: "Nature is the source of much value to us every day, and yet it mostly bypasses markets, escapes pricing and defies valuation...The economic compass that we use today was a success when it was created, but it needs to be improved or replaced."

The study has made an important start. It estimates the annual cost of biodiversity loss at close to 3 trillion dollars, which is comparable to what three major sectors of the economy gross in total per year, the car industry earning 1.9 trillion, the IT industry 0.95 trillion, and steel 0.6 trillion.

In response to a growing awareness of the important role biodiversity plays in sustaining the global economy, the first global meeting on business and biodiversity was held in London in January 2005, followed by a second in São Paulo in November 2005. The outcomes of these meetings led to the first decision on business and biodiversity at the Convention on Biological Diversity's eight meeting in Curitiba, Brazil, in March 2006.

At our ninth meeting in Bonn, Germany, the First International Business Initiative for the Protection of Biodiversity was launched at the initiative of the German government. Japan, which will host our tenth Conference of the Parties this coming October in the city of Nagoya, is also contributing to these efforts: 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.

Let me emphasize just how important worldwide engagement of the private sector is at this juncture. In Nagoya our 193 Parties are expected to finalize our 2011-2020 Strategic Plan, create a 2020 biodiversity target and a 2050 biodiversity vision, and establish an international regime on Access and Benefit-Sharing. In Nagoya the international community will establish a comprehensive plan for finally stopping the loss of our biological resources in the years to come.

This must and will be done using the input of all stakeholders, including the business community.

To facilitate business involvement in Nagoya, a high-level dialogue between Chief Executive Officers and Government Ministers will be held on 28 October. This dialogue will coincide with the Messe Nagoya, the first-ever technological fair on biodiversity.

In addition, two important documents are helping us to include a business perspective in Nagoya. The first is the Jakarta Charter on Business and Biodiversity, and the second is comments on a Strategy to Advance the 2020 Business and Biodiversity Agenda.

These two documents emerged from the third global conference on business and biodiversity, which took place this past December in Indonesia. More than 200 companies, non-governmental organizations and governments from all over the world gathered in Jakarta recognizing that biodiversity-based business can be more profitable than other economic activities, and that biodiversity already forms the basis of many economic sectors.

Building on this momentum, now is the time for the complete engagement of the business community in the fight to save life on Earth. At the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2009, Ban Ki-Moon said: "We stand at a crossroad. It is important that we realize we have a choice. We can choose short-sighted unilateralism and business as usual. Or we can grasp global cooperation and partnership on a scale never before seen."

Heeding his words, a spirit of cooperation and partnership is driving the celebrations of the International Year of Biodiversity. It will motivate the 65th session of the UN General Assembly this September, where heads of state will devote a day to the question of biodiversity loss for the first time ever. It will guide the deliberations of the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit in a few months time. And in 2012, it will underpin our eleventh Conference of the Parties, to be held in New Delhi.

Vandana Shiva has quite rightly said, "In nature's economy the currency is not money, it is life." That wisdom must ultimately guide the actions of all sectors of society over the months and years to come if we are to pass on a healthy, stable and prosperous planet to our children and grandchildren.

"Biodiversity is life," as the slogan of the International Year reminds us. "Biodiversity is OUR life."

Thank you kindly.