



STATEMENT BY

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF
NATURAL HISTORY EVENT ON
“THE ROLE OF BIODIVERSITY AND HEALTHY
ECOSYSTEMS IN SUPPORTING CHILD HEALTH”**

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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,

On 10 February 2010, the American Museum of National History was the host of the North American launch of the International Year of Biodiversity, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). More than 400 participants attended this unique event. Today, here we are again hosted by the American Museum of National History for another contribution to the celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity, focusing on health and children. I would like therefore to thank Dr. Felicity Arengo and her staff for their involvement in promoting the biodiversity agenda. Also, I would like to pay tribute to Ambassador Okuda who, despite his heavy schedule, has blessed by his presence today's meeting. This is yet another contribution by Japan, as the host of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to be held in Nagoya in October 2010.

In a couple of days, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity will be releasing the third edition of its flagship publication Global Biodiversity Outlook. This report will be launched on 10 May in Nairobi and here in New York, as well as in all United Nations capitals. This report is based on 120 national reports submitted by Parties to the Convention. The news is not good; biodiversity continues to be lost at unprecedented rate. Not a single country, not a single citizen will be immune from the adverse impact of the loss of biodiversity compounded with climate change. However, those who will suffer the most are the most vulnerable segment of the society, and in particular children. I would therefore like to congratulate UNDP and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for organizing today's event on the role of biodiversity and healthy ecosystems in supporting child health.

This important event brings to the forefront the significance of biodiversity and its impact on the wellbeing of humankind's most vulnerable component – children. Children constitute one third of our population and our entire future, it is our responsibility to take action now to ensure that their future is protected.

The theme of biodiversity compounds several cross-cutting issues that affect all forms of life on Earth. One of these issues, the condition of human health, remains inevitably linked to the condition of biodiversity, as it contributes tremendously to human health through the innumerable goods and services it provides us for free, including *inter alia* food, medicines, air water purification, pollination of crops for food, buffering from floods and storm surges, and climate stabilization. Therefore, it remains clear that the loss or conservation of ecosystems, species, populations, habitats, all have implications for human health.

To focus on food as an example, biodiversity can be used to alleviate the effects of the micronutrient deficiencies that are undermining the health of hundreds of millions of people in developing countries, since a more diverse diet is an effective means of acquiring important nutrients. Children, unfortunately, remain the greater victims of malnutrition and health hazards across the world. According to Action Against Hunger, worldwide, some 55 million children under the age of five suffer from acute malnutrition and 19 million of these children suffer from the most serious type of malnutrition, resulting in nearly five million child deaths per year. The consequences of precarious conditions for food production from devastated ecosystems, caused either by climate change, natural disasters, or anthropogenic influence, are dramatic. Infrastructure is destroyed, diseases spread faster, arable lands are lost and people can no longer grow crops or raise livestock, all directly impacting the health of vulnerable populations. The number of hungry people in the world has passed the one billion mark for the first time ever; this means that one in six people struggle with hunger on a daily basis.

Water, another fundamental component of human health, is also directly linked to the state of biodiversity. For example, globally, 33 of the largest cities in the planet enjoy clean drinking water thanks to protected areas. However, in increasingly more countries, natural or man-made contamination and destruction of water sources threatens the health of millions of people. Lack of potable water creates poor sanitation, which in turn creates dangerous hygiene practices that increase the vulnerability to infectious

and water-borne diseases. According to UNICEF, water and sanitation related diseases remain the most significant child health problems worldwide. Diarrhea alone kills 5,000 children a day.

Unfortunately, the last 50 years have experienced the fastest rate of biodiversity loss in human history. If the current loss rates continue, it is projected that an area of 1.3 billion hectares worldwide – about 1.5 times the United States – will completely lose its original biodiversity levels by 2050. Paradoxically, in the quest of improving quality of life, human activity has been the decisive factor in the accelerated extinction of species and habitats, which in turn adversely affect the conditions of the most susceptible regions and communities in the world. Hence, conserving biodiversity inside and around our communities is a way to ensure healthy populations. In this regard, it is the fundamental mandate of the Convention on Biological Diversity to promote the conservation of healthy ecosystems through the sustainable use of its components, to guarantee that children now and 100 years from now, continue to benefit from biodiversity.

The reality of the loss of our biodiversity and the implications it has for mankind remains unknown to most of the policy makers and the public at large and in particular for the young generation. It is for this reason that the United Nations General Assembly decided to declare 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity to raise public awareness and engage people of the world for protecting life on earth. The decision was also based on the need to assess progress achieved in implementing the Johannesburg commitment adopted in 2002 by the 110 leaders of the world to substantially reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010 and agree on a post 2010 biodiversity strategy. The Secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity, serving as the focal point for the International Year of Biodiversity, has as objectives to raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity, to communicate the human costs of its ongoing loss, and to get people throughout the world, and in particular youth and children, involved in efforts to conserve and sustainably use our natural heritage.

As such, today's event is about recognizing the importance of biodiversity for human health; it is about recognizing the importance of passing on a healthy planet to our children and we are proud to be part of this effort. As Marian Wright said, "If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand for much", and I believe that if we don't stand up for the 55 million children who are malnourished, and those millions of children suffering from cholera, malaria or trachoma, we don't stand for much. If we don't stand up for the future of our children which cannot be disconnected from biodiversity, we don't stand for much. Indeed,

Biodiversity is Life, Biodiversity is our Life.

Thank you for your kind attention.
