



**Convention on  
Biological Diversity**



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

## **STATEMENT**

**by**

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

**ON THE OCCASION OF**

**WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY CELEBRATION**

**UNDER THE THEME**

**“MANY SPECIES- ONE PLANET –ONE FUTURE”**

***Kigali, 3 June 2010***

*Please check against delivery*



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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,

Last week in Nairobi the world community celebrated the International Day for Biological Diversity under the theme “Biodiversity for Development and Poverty Alleviation”. Here we are today in Kigali celebrating the World Environment Day under the theme “Many Species- One Planet- One Future”. Kigali is today the capital of the environment. This is a timely and legitimate tribute paid today to the people and the government of Rwanda for their unique contribution in advancing the biodiversity agenda. It is a great honour bestowed on me to attend today this historical event which coincides also with the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity. Rwanda, lying at the heart of the Albertine Rift, is in one of Africa’s most biologically diverse regions. This natural bounty is something that Rwandans take seriously, with over 10 per cent of the landscape dedicated to protected areas. Your breathtaking national parks – Volcanoes, Akakera and Nyungwe – are a testament and homage to the natural wonders of this country.

The far-sightedness of Rwandans when it comes to biodiversity is apparent not only in this country’s national parks, but also in Kwita Izina, the baby-gorilla-naming ceremony begun in 2005. Today, an additional eleven newborn mountain gorillas will be named at the foot of the Virunga Mountains. What better way to bring attention to these iconic but endangered species!

Such outreach efforts have help to increase gorilla-based tourism in this region. They have led to rise in employment and associated benefits to the local communities. And they have led to a reduction in gorilla poaching and a rise in the number of gorillas. Your hard work and dedication is helping to show the world that when conservation is integrated into the everyday life of people, everyone benefits.

That is one of the key messages of International Year of Biodiversity, which was declared by the United Nations General Assembly in order to help raise awareness about the irreplaceable contributions that biodiversity makes to our health, well-being and economic prosperity. It is a message that must be repeated as often as possible, for the recently-released third edition of the Convention on Biological Diversity’s *Global Biodiversity Outlook* – a wide-ranging synthesis of the state of biodiversity today – shows that today we humans continue to driving species extinct at an unprecedented rate.

The report further warns that irreparable degradation may take place if ecosystems are pushed beyond certain tipping points, leading to the widespread and irreversible loss of biological goods and ecosystem services that we depend on greatly for our health and wellbeing. Immediate action to save biodiversity is required if we are to maintain the quality of life that so many of us take for granted, and if the poor are not to sink further into poverty.

This is particularly true when we factor in climate change. Africa, for example, is a continent already under pressure from climate stresses and is therefore that much more vulnerable to further climate change. One third of Africans live in drought-prone areas, with 220 million experiencing drought every year. Climate models suggest that such natural hazards are expected to become still more frequent and severe with global warming, resulting in increased water scarcity, decreased agricultural productivity, and a decline in major subsistence crops such as sorghum, maize and groundnuts.

As the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, has said: “There is no escaping the fact that we live off the environment. However, the downside of this dependency is that, as a continent,

we are extremely vulnerable to sudden changes to our ecosystems – particularly climate change.”

Rwanda and other African countries will pay a heavy price, given that agriculture is responsible for 47 per cent of Rwanda’s GNP, accounts for 71 per cent of Rwanda’s export revenues and is a source of income for 87 per cent of its population.

To help meet the interrelated challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change, this September the United Nations General Assembly will for first time hold a high-level meeting to discuss the importance of biodiversity, its role in sustainable development, and its role in tackling the climate crisis. Then, in October, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity will take place in Nagoya, Japan.

In Nagoya, the 193 Parties to the Convention—representing nearly every nation on Earth—will together finalize a 2020 biodiversity target and a 2050 biodiversity vision as a part of a comprehensive post-2010 Strategic Plan for stopping biodiversity loss in the future. This will be done with the participation of a broad range of stakeholders, including youth, local and indigenous authorities, parliamentarians, cooperative agencies and the private sector.

President Kagame has pointed out that “despite the importance of the environment to our livelihoods, its protection has long been relegated to the confines of small groups of specialists”. That is precisely the situation what we must change during this 2010 International Year of Biodiversity. Protecting our biological resources for the sake of current and future generations must be a concern of every single inhabitant of planet Earth, and of every single sector of society. As the slogan of the International Year reminds us: “Biodiversity is life...biodiversity is OUR life.”

Thank you for your kind attention.