



STATEMENT

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

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE HIGH-LEVEL INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON THE
STRATEGY FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION**

**25 AUGUST 2010
CHEGNDU, CHINA**

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Life in harmony, into the future
いのちの共生を、未来へ
COP 10 / MOP 5

Your Excellency Vice Minister Li Ganjie, Your Excellency Vice Governor Chen Wenhua, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you here today in Sichuan. I think I speak for people around the world when I say that the courage and strength the people of this province have shown in their efforts to recover from the devastating 2008 earthquake have been truly inspirational. I would like to commend the people of Sichuan for showing the international community the value of solidarity and hard work in a time of unprecedented crisis.

Let us find motivation in this example as we discuss today another unprecedented crisis: biodiversity loss. This past May the CBD Secretariat released the third edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO3). Based on 120 national reports of Parties to the CBD and the scientific literature, GBO3 showed that species worldwide continue to disappear at a tremendous rate – up to 1,000 times the natural background rate of extinction. It warns that irreversible degradation may take place if ecosystems are pushed beyond certain tipping points, leading to the widespread loss of services such as air and water purification, the renewal of soil fertility, climate stabilization, and the pollination of wild plants and crops, to name just a few.

Faced with this crisis, it is time for the international community to rethink its relationship with life on this planet. For a new way forward we can do no better than listen to the words of Premier Wen Jiabao, who a few years ago stated: "We need to pursue a resource-economizing and ecologically-friendly way of development, so that humanity may live in harmony with nature forever."

These are true words of wisdom coming from the leader of China, one of the preeminent nations of the world and its fastest-growing major economy. They are perhaps not surprising, however, since China is also one of the world's mega-diverse biodiversity countries. The figures are truly impressive: China has perhaps the greatest total number of species amongst countries in the Northern Hemisphere, ranks third in the world for number of higher plant species, accounts for 13 per cent of the world's total animal species, and harbours every type of the world's terrestrial ecosystems. In addition, China is one of the world's major centres of origin of genetic resources.

Living in harmony with nature is therefore something we should expect from the Chinese. And indeed, the list of actions taken by China to preserve biodiversity is both extensive and impressive. This country was amongst the first to have adopted a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP). Subsequently, China established a national coordinating group on implementation of the CBD involving more than 20 government departments and institutions. It has also developed a set of laws and regulations for the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources that cover forestry, grasslands, wild animals and plants, and trade in endangered species. In addition, China has developed and implemented a national programme for protected areas, a national programme for the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources, and a national strategy for plant conservation.

On top of all of this, China has undertaken considerable research and survey work on the status of biodiversity, established a few hundred zoos and botanical gardens as well as a number of gene banks for ex situ conservation of biodiversity, and issued a white paper on biodiversity and climate change. I am also glad to note that such commendable efforts have not been confined to the national level: a number of provinces have developed their own biodiversity

action plans. They include Sichuan, which is one of the most biodiversity-rich provinces in China with many endemic, rare species such as the panda and golden monkey.

China's push toward living in harmony with nature has continued unabated during this 2010 International Year of Biodiversity. This year China established a national committee on biodiversity, headed by Vice Premier Li Keqiang and composed of vice ministers of key government departments. China is also going to update its NBSAP, with increased emphasis placed on such key issues such as access and benefit-sharing, invasive alien species, biofuels, and climate change. Most importantly, the revised NBSAP includes national targets for 2020. For example, by 2020 China plans to increase its protected areas coverage from 15 to 18 per cent of its land area and to halt the loss of biodiversity. In addition, more provinces in China are developing their own biodiversity action plans and strengthening their institutional capacities for biodiversity conservation, while public awareness of biodiversity issues is increasing as a result of more media coverage.

Having shown such a strong commitment toward biodiversity, it is time for China to push its vision of living in harmony with nature on the international stage. On September 22nd the 65th session of UN General Assembly will for first time ever convene a high-level segment on biodiversity with the participation of Heads of State and Government. Roundtable discussions will be held on post-2010 action for stopping biodiversity loss, the links between climate change and biodiversity, and the importance of biodiversity to poverty alleviation, development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The vision emerging from these discussions will then be submitted in October to the high-level segment of the Convention's tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Nagoya, Japan.

In Nagoya our 193 Parties – almost every nation on Earth – will together create a new biodiversity target for 2020 and a biodiversity vision for 2050 as part of a post-2010 strategy for stopping biodiversity loss. Our new strategic plan will be finalized and adopted with the participation of all stakeholders, including youth, local and indigenous authorities, parliamentarians, cooperative agencies and the private sector. It will promote concerted action by all sectors of government and society, emphasizing that biodiversity loss is interlinked with issues such as poverty, climate change, water scarcity, growth in demand, development and international conflict – and therefore can no longer be treated as a stand-alone issue. In addition, two new legal instruments will be adopted in Nagoya, a biosafety protocol on liability and redress as well as a protocol on access and benefit sharing.

Also at COP10, the First South-South Cooperation Forum on Biodiversity for Development is to be held, with the objective of giving developing countries an opportunity to adopt a Multi-Year Plan of Action for submission to all Parties. China is the largest developing country in the world and has been extending its helping hand to many other developing countries. Cooperation between China and Africa for example is deeply rooted yet ever growing. I hope that biodiversity will become the next bond strengthening the relationship between China and developing countries all over the world.

I would like to point out that the slogan of COP10 is 'Life in Harmony, into the Future'. Fittingly, we find in this slogan the same vision found in Premier Wen Jiabao's statement of humanity living in harmony with nature forever. I have no doubt that guided by this vision and with the full engagement of China, the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit will go down in history as a landmark meeting, as the moment when the international community came together as a whole to

preserve our biological resources. I have no doubt it will go down as the moment when we humans decided to ensure the long-term health, wellbeing and prosperity of our species by protecting and preserving life on Earth.

With this in mind, I would like to commend you for organizing this forum, which is not only being held at a critical moment, but also addresses a number of key issues important both domestically and internationally, namely, climate change and biodiversity, access and benefit-sharing, poverty reduction, and development and biodiversity. I wish to pay tribute to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and other relevant central government departments as well as the Sichuan Provincial Government and other local governments present here. I believe that the outcomes of this important initiative will not only guide China's biodiversity actions at various levels over the coming decades but will also contribute greatly to international developments on these issues. I wish you fruitful and successful deliberations.

Thank you for your kind attention.