



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

STATEMENT

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

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE ROLE OF
AGROBIODIVERSITY IN ADDRESSING HUNGER AND
CLIMATE CHANGE:
*THE ROAD TO NAGOYA***

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

Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In his 'Somnambulist Ballad', the great Spanish playwright and poet Federico Garcia Lorca wrote "Green, how I love you green. Green wind. Green branches." These words could very well serve as the refrain of this 2010 International Year of Biodiversity, for a love of Green is something that the Convention on Biological Diversity and its partners are trying to promote during this historic year – and indeed well beyond it.

We are at a moment in history when humans must begin to live in harmony with nature or suffer the consequences of our own short-sightedness. As I mentioned yesterday, this May the third edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook showed that we humans continue to drive species extinct at up to 1,000 times the natural background rate, which is undermining the stability of ecosystems across the planet and thereby threatening our own wellbeing.

Sadly, it is the poorest amongst us who will bear the immediate brunt of this destruction:

13 million hectares of the world's forests are lost due to deforestation each year. Meanwhile, 300 million people worldwide, the majority poor, are estimated to depend substantially on forest biodiversity, including non-wood forest products, for their survival and livelihood.

80 percent of examined world marine fish stocks are fully exploited or overexploited. And yet 1 billion people depend on fish as their sole or main source of animal protein, while fish provided more than 2.6 billion people with at least 20 percent of their average per capita animal protein intake.

60 per cent of coral reefs could be lost by 2030 through fishing damage, pollution, disease, invasive alien species and coral bleaching. At the same time, around 30 million people in the poorest and most vulnerable coastal and inland communities entirely depend on coral reefs for their livelihoods.

Overall, it is estimated that natural capital constitutes 26 per cent of the total wealth of low-income countries. Indeed, small-scale or informal sectors based on such activities as small-scale farming, animal husbandry, informal forestry, fisheries are collectively termed the "GDP of the poor", being the basement sectors from which most of the developing world's poor draw their livelihood and employment. If tabulated against conventional GDP the contribution of ecosystem services comes to about 7 per cent. However, if only the "GDP of the poor" is considered, the contribution of ecosystem services jumps to 57 per cent.

The ramifications of biodiversity loss become all the more worrisome when we factor in climate change. At the Copenhagen Climate Conference last December, the CBD's Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Climate Change and Biodiversity released a major report which shows that the degradation of many ecosystems is significantly reducing their carbon storage and sequestration capacity, leading to increases in emissions of greenhouse gases.

For example, deforestation is currently estimated to be responsible for 20 per cent of annual human-induced CO₂ emissions, as forests account for as much as 80 per cent of the total above-ground terrestrial carbon. Further, 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, as forest and peatland loss continues, a much greater proportion of global carbon ends up in the atmosphere and not in terrestrial biomass. Likewise, intensive agricultural

practices that destroy ground cover and increase soil erosion decrease the retention time of carbon in the soil.

Moreover, the AHTEG report shows that the relationship between biodiversity and climate change goes both ways: 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 is expected to hold true up to at least a 5°C increase.

Indeed, observed changes in climate have already adversely affected biodiversity at the species and ecosystem level, with further changes in biodiversity being inevitable with further changes in climate. For example, changes in the climate have 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.

Overall, 89 per cent of fourth national reports received by the Convention indicate that climate change is either currently driving biodiversity loss or will drive it in the relatively near future.

To make matter worse, climate change is destabilizing the global food supply. The Food Security Risk Index 2010, compiled by the British risk analysis firm Maplecroft on the basis of 12 factors drawn up in collaboration with the UN's World Food Programme, highlights that the recent heat wave in Russia and the devastating floods in Pakistan will have long term effects on the food security of those countries. The situation is equally worrying in Africa, which has 36 of the 50 nations most at risk in the index and is particularly vulnerable to extreme weather events and desertification under changing climatic conditions.

The increased pressures being put by climate change on food security comes at a time when agricultural biodiversity is more threatened than ever. Seventy-five per cent of the food crop varieties we once grew have disappeared from our fields in the last 100 years. Twenty-one per cent of the world's 7,000 livestock breeds are classified as being at risk, while more than 60 breeds are reported to have become extinct during the first six years of this century alone. Of the 7,000 species of plants that have been domesticated over the history of agriculture, a mere 30 account for 90 per cent of all the food that we eat every day.

This loss of genetic diversity has potentially devastating consequences. For example, widespread failure in our handful of remaining major crops and animal breeds due to disease or pest outbreaks is a very real possibility: given that pest and pathogens are constantly evolving, a diverse gene pool is essential if we are to develop insect- and disease-resistant strains in the future. Moreover, our reliance on so few plants and animal breeds makes human populations that much more vulnerable to climate change: as growing conditions change, the most suitable species, breeds or strains in a given region may likewise change.

The ongoing global decline in pollinators such as bats and bees is also undermining agricultural productivity. In one study of 30 crops, estimated harvest loss through lack of pollination was US\$ 54.6 billion, representing a 46 per cent loss of crop yields. Overall, the contribution of insect pollinators to agricultural output is estimated at about US\$ 190 billion/year. It should be obvious that replacing the natural services provided by pollinators would be extremely costly, if not outright impossible.

We simply cannot afford for the drop in food production that might follow further loss of agricultural biodiversity. According to the FAO's 2009 hunger report *The State of Food Insecurity*, undernourishment remains a serious problem around the world, especially in developing countries. In Asia and the Pacific, an estimated 642 million people are suffering from chronic hunger; in Sub-Saharan Africa 265 million; in Latin America and the Caribbean 53 million; in the Near East and North Africa 42 million; and in developed countries 15 million.

All of this is why agricultural biodiversity is one of the main programmes of work of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and why we have established cross-cutting initiatives on Pollinators, Soil Biodiversity and Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition.

More generally, the deep connection between biodiversity and human wellbeing is why the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, World Leaders agreed to achieve the 2010 Biodiversity Target of significantly slowing rates of biodiversity loss worldwide by 2010 as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth. It is why the 2010 target was incorporated as a new target under the Millennium Development Goals and endorsed by the UN General Assembly. It is why 2010 was declared the International Year of Biodiversity and why in one week, the 65th session of the UN General Assembly will devote an entire day to the problem of biodiversity loss and discuss the importance of biodiversity in sustainable development.

However, as GBO3 points out, the nations of the world have individually and collectively failed to meet the 2010 Target. And yet as Cervantes said, "There is no greater folly in the world than for a man to despair." With much work ahead of us, this International Year of Biodiversity has been devoted not only to raising awareness about the problem of biodiversity loss, but also to learning from our successes and failure and forging a new road ahead.

Over the first half of this year a series of consultations and meetings have taken place with the aim of revising and updating the strategic plan of the Convention for the period 2011-2020, culminating work that began several years ago. In May in Nairobi the third meeting of the Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention produced a draft agreement on the new strategic plan and on mobilizing financial resources. The new strategic plan is expected to be finalized this October at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in Nagoya, Japan, with the participation of a broad range of stakeholders – including youth, local and indigenous authorities, parliamentarians, cooperative agencies and the private sector.

Work to date 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 measureable, and with a clear underlying logic consistent with the available scientific evidence, including the scientific review of biodiversity projections prepared for Global Biodiversity Outlook 3. These will be the so-called SMART targets—goals that are at once strategic, measureable, ambitious yet realistic and time-bound.

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 have 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.

In sum, the new strategic plan is being devised with the realization that in order to achieve sustainable development, the preservation of our biological resources must be mainstreamed into society at large, including our economic systems and markets.

With this in mind, the final phase of the study *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity* (TEEB) will be launched in Nagoya. This study is deeply important because despite our fundamental dependence on the goods and services that biodiversity offers the economic value of biodiversity has historically been overlooked. As study leader Pavan Sukhdev has written: “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.”

Hence, in making a clear and comprehensive economic case for preserving biodiversity, the TEEB will help bring attention to the importance of biodiversity for sustainable development and ultimately contribute to the successful implementation of our post-2010 strategic plan.

Moreover, the new Strategic Plan will be complemented by a multi-year plan of action on South-South Cooperation on Biodiversity for Development, which was developed through a partnership between the Group of 77 and China and the Convention Secretariat. In addition, the ministerial segment of the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit will also be held with the participation of heads of state. The expected 120 ministers will establish a dialogue with their partners, in particular with mayors, parliamentarians, youth, indigenous peoples and non-governmental organizations, but also with CEO of companies. Finally, a Business and Biodiversity Initiative will also be adopted at COP10.

Pedro Calderón de la Barca said, “Lost chances are the worst misfortunes.” Let us not therefore squander the opportunity presented by the International Year of Biodiversity. And indeed, I am glad to say that the International Year is unfolding in precisely a spirit of urgent engagement.

Participation has been worldwide: after the official launch in early January in Berlin under the chairmanship of Chancellor Merkel, regional launches took place in Curitiba, Paris, London, Nagoya, Madrid, New York, Beijing, New Delhi and Tokyo, among other locations. These events

have been integral in creating momentum toward the New York Biodiversity Summit on September 22nd and COP10 in Nagoya next month.

Now is the time to forge a global alliance of all sectors of society in the fight to save life on Earth and thereby ensure our own long-term wellbeing and prosperity on this planet.

As the slogan of the International Year reminds us: Biodiversity is life...Biodiversity is our life.

Thank you for your kind attention.