



**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 CONFERENCE ON AGRICULTURE, FOOD SECURITY  
AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

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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,

At the opening of the Convention on Biological Diversity's COP6 here in The Hague in 2002, Conference President and Netherlands State Secretary of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries Geke Faber stated that it was necessary to move from policy development and dialogue to action. The Parties responded by adopting the 2010 target of significantly slowing biodiversity loss by the end of the decade as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth.

However, during this 2010 International Year of Biodiversity, the news is not good. In May the third edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook showed that species worldwide continue to disappear at up to 1,000 times the natural background rate of extinction. The report further warns that without concerted action massive further loss of biodiversity is projected to occur before the end of the century and that ecosystems are approaching tipping points beyond which they will be irreversibly degraded, with dire consequences for human wellbeing.

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

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. And yet 80 percent of examined world marine fish stocks are fully exploited or overexploited

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

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 CO<sub>2</sub> 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. 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 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 synergistically addressing poverty, climate change and biodiversity loss plays a large role in the international community's 2011-2020 biodiversity strategy, which was just adopted at CBD COP10 in Nagoya, Japan with the participation on all stakeholders, including youth, local and indigenous authorities, parliamentarians and the private sector. It is also why the three Rio Conventions are increasingly collaborating as we work toward such important events such as the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Brazil in 2012 (Rio +20) and the Millennium Development Goals Review in 2015. For example, the Rio Conventions have together launched an Ecosystems and Climate Change Pavilion to allow Parties and organisations to profile activities linking biodiversity conservation, sustainable land management and climate change mitigation and adaptation, especially at national and sub-

national levels. This year the Pavilion was held at CBD COP10 in Nagoya and will also be held at UNFCCC COP16 in Cancun. It is also anticipated that the Pavilion will take place in 2011 at UNCCD COP 10 in the Republic of Korea and at the UNFCCC COP 17 in South Africa, with its momentum carrying through to Rio +20.

My hope is that increased collaboration within the international community and between all sectors of society on biodiversity loss and climate change will help us achieve the vision was formed in The Hague those eight years ago: to preserve our biological resources for future generations, and thereby help eradicate poverty and hunger.

Thank you for your kind attention.