



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**



MESSAGE

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE SEMINAR “BANANAS AND BAMBOO”: BIODIVERSITY
MANAGEMENT OF AT RISK COMMERCIALY VALUABLE
CROPS THROUGH COMMUNITY-TECHNOLOGY
INTEGRATION**

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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,

It is a pleasure to address you today. Please accept my sincere thanks for including me in this important event as a part of the International Year of Biodiversity celebrations. I would also like to thank Lady Brabourne College and Peerless Green Initiatives for organizing and hosting this unique event.

For the last 11 months, the world has been celebrating the International Day for Biological Diversity, and this year, the focus is on Biodiversity, Development and Poverty Alleviation. Celebration of this theme provides a unique opportunity to raise public awareness on the importance of biodiversity to sustainable development and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. These three aspects are inextricably linked to each other, and more importantly in this case, to agriculture. Poor rural communities depend on biodiversity and ecosystem services for health and nutrition, for crop development, and as a safety net when faced with climate variability and natural disasters. Agricultural biodiversity provides humans with food and raw materials for goods - such as cotton for clothing, wood for shelter and fuel, plants and roots for medicines, and materials for biofuels - and with incomes and livelihoods, including those derived from subsistence farming. Agricultural biodiversity also performs ecosystem services such as soil and water conservation, maintenance of soil fertility and biota, and pollination, all of which are essential to human survival. In addition, genetic diversity of agricultural biodiversity provides species with the ability to adapt to changing environment and evolve, by increasing their tolerance to frost, high temperature, drought and water-logging, as well as their resistance to particular diseases, pests and parasites for example.

During the last decades, worldwide biodiversity has been lost at an unprecedented rate in all the ecosystems, including agro-ecosystems. Homogenization of agricultural production systems, mainly due to intensification of agricultural systems coupled with specialization by plant and animals breeders and the harmonizing effects of globalization, is one of the greatest causes of agricultural biodiversity loss, through genetic erosion and the increasing levels of genetic vulnerability of specialized crops and livestock. According to the FAO, it is estimated that about three-quarters of the genetic diversity found in agricultural crops has been lost over the last century, and this genetic erosion continues. For example, today, 90% of our food energy and protein comes from only 15 plant and 8 animal species, with disturbing consequences for nutrition and food security. Wheat, rice and maize alone provide more than 50% of the global plant-based energy intake. In addition to agricultural biodiversity, modern agricultural practices can also impact biodiversity in other ecosystems through several ways such as unsustainable demands on water, overgrazing, as well as excessive use of nutrients and chemical inputs to control weeds, pests and diseases that result in problems of pollution and eutrophication. Furthermore, land and habitat conversion to large-scale agricultural production also cause significant loss of biodiversity.

Biodiversity and agriculture are strongly interrelated because while biodiversity is critical for agriculture, agriculture can also contribute to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Indeed, sustainable agriculture both promotes and is enhanced by biodiversity. Maintenance of this biodiversity is essential for the sustainable production of food and other agricultural products and the benefits these provide to humanity, including food security, nutrition and livelihoods. The major challenge for agriculture is to ensure food security, adequate nutrition and stable livelihoods for all, now and in the future, by increasing food production while adopting sustainable and efficient agriculture, sustainable consumption of resources, and landscape-level planning to ensure the preservation of biodiversity. On the positive side, over the past few decades agriculture has made enormous contributions to feeding the planet and lifting people out of poverty. Farmers have also played the leading role in maintaining the agricultural biodiversity we still have and many have made genuine efforts to reduce the impact of farming. However, 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 the nations of the world have individually and collectively failed to meet the 2010 Biodiversity Target. We continue to drive

species extinct at up to 1,000 times the natural background rate. We therefore need to do more, and I am hopeful that today's debate will provide for an exchange of best practices as well as inspiration for further concrete action.

The Convention on Biological Diversity and I share your concern about biodiversity issues as they relate to agriculture and we are involved in helping member parties to not only be aware of this growing problem, but also to take the next step; action. The CBD programme of work on agricultural biological diversity works to promote the positive effects and mitigate the negative impacts of agricultural practices as well as the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources of actual and potential value for food and agriculture. Biodiversity is the basis of agriculture. It has enabled farming systems to evolve ever since agriculture was first developed some 10,000 years ago. Biodiversity is the origin of all species of crops and domesticated livestock and the variety within them. It is also the foundation of ecosystem services essential to sustain agriculture and human well-being. Today's crop and livestock biodiversity are the result of many thousands years of human intervention.

Preserving agricultural biodiversity and plant genetic resources plays a large role in the Convention's 2011-2020 Strategic Plan, which was recently adopted at COP10 in Nagoya, Japan. Also the adoption of an international protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing, has given greater legal certainty and clarity to both users and providers of genetic resources by providing an incentive for public and private sector research while ensuring that a fair and equitable share of benefits arising from this research accrues to the countries providing the genetic resources. These decisions demonstrates the international community's commitment to the preservation of biodiversity in all its forms.

The 2010 International Year of Biodiversity offers a unique opportunity to ensure that the voice of farmers, speaking in unison for life on Earth and the future of humanity, is heard far and wide. I therefore commend you for your participation in today's meeting. Mahatma Gandhi, that great defender of farmers, famously said: "The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problem." These words need to motivate our actions from now until end of 2010 and beyond. By redoubling our efforts over the coming months and years, I am sure that we will be able to preserve agricultural biodiversity, and thus help to protect our future wellbeing and prosperity. As the slogan of the International Year reminds us, "Biodiversity is life...biodiversity is OUR life."

Thank you for your kind attention.