



Convention on
Biological Diversity

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STATEMENT BY

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

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

**OPENING OF THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE
INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD
AND AGRICULTURE**

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BALI, INDONESIA**



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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 Bali Climate Conference in 2007, the President of Indonesia Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono asked the world, “If it is clear that the cost of inaction far outweighs the cost of action, what prevents us from investing the necessary resources today for our common future?”

That question has echoed through every single environmental conference in the years since, and nowhere more so than during the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit last October. A few months prior, Global Biodiversity Outlook 3, based on the best available scientific evidence and drawing upon 120 national reports of Parties to the Convention, had warned that the continuing loss of species and habitats increasingly threatened the life-support systems of our planet, and therefore human wellbeing and prosperity. It reminded us that the status of biodiversity for millions of years would be determined by the actions we took in the coming decades.

The response of the international community was laudable: in Nagoya the 193 Parties to the Convention adopted the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan of the CBD, or the “Aichi Target”. Just as importantly, after six years of intense negotiations, the Parties adopted the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization.

The Conference of the Parties and the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly called upon the Convention’s 193 Parties to sign the Nagoya Protocol at the earliest opportunity, and to deposit their instruments of ratification as soon as possible. The Nagoya Protocol will enter into force 90 days after the deposit of the fiftieth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.

The purpose of the Protocol is to effectively implement one of the three core objectives of the Convention: the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. It builds on the access and benefit-sharing provisions of the Convention.

This historic agreement establishes a legal framework to translate the basic “bargain” enshrined in the Convention, into tangible and effective measures. It provides greater legal certainty and transparency for both providers and users of genetic resources by establishing more predictable conditions for access to genetic resources and by establishing specific obligations to support compliance with domestic legislation or regulatory requirements of the Party providing genetic resources and contractual obligations reflected in mutually agreed terms. These provisions, including the monitoring of genetic resources, will contribute to ensuring the sharing of benefits with providers of genetic resources.

It is important to note that the relationship between the Nagoya Protocol and the International Treaty was duly considered by governments during the negotiations of the Nagoya Protocol.

As a result, the preamble of the Protocol makes a number of key references recognising the importance of genetic resources to food security and of the International Treaty.

In particular, the Protocol recognises the interdependence of all countries with regard to genetic resources for food and agriculture as well as their special nature and importance for achieving food security worldwide and for sustainable development of agriculture in the context of poverty alleviation and climate change. It also acknowledges the fundamental role of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and of the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in this regard.

It also recalls that the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing established under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture was developed in harmony with the Convention and recognizes that international instruments related to access and benefit-sharing should be mutually supportive with a view to achieving the objectives of the Convention.

In addition, the text of the Protocol also addresses the relationship of the Protocol with international agreements and instruments (Article 4).

It should be noted that the Protocol provides that it shall be implemented in a mutually supportive manner with other relevant international instruments.

Of particular relevance to the relationship with the International Treaty is Article 14(4) which states that “Where a specialized international access and benefit-sharing instrument applies that is consistent with, and does not run counter to the objectives of the Convention and this Protocol, this Protocol does not apply for the Party or Parties to the specialized instrument in respect of the specific genetic resource covered by and for the purposes of the specialized instrument.”

Finally, the Protocol also provides that Parties shall, in the development of their national access and benefit-sharing legislation or regulatory requirements, consider the importance of genetic resources for food and agriculture and their special role for food security (Article 8 (c)).

Given the key relationship between the Protocol and the International Treaty, cooperation will be essential to ensure that both instruments are implemented in a mutually supportive manner.

In light of this, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Nagoya between the Secretariats of the CBD and the International Treaty to support our close collaboration.

Thanks to the financial support provided by the Global Environment Facility, the SCBD will be carrying out a series of awareness-raising and capacity-building activities over the next biennium to support ratification and early entry into force of the Protocol by the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties in October 2012.

Among these activities, capacity-building workshops will be jointly organized with the International Treaty Secretariat with a view to support the implementation of both agreements in a mutually supportive manner.

Hence, with adoption of the Nagoya Protocol a new era of cooperation between the Convention and the ITPGRFA was born. And indeed we already have a rich history together. The Convention has long recognized the Treaty’s contribution to the implementation of our Programme of Work on Agriculture and has welcomed the Treaty’s contribution to the cross-cutting initiative on biodiversity for food and nutrition. Through the conservation of plant genetic resources, the Treaty has also supported the Convention’s Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, in particular target 9.

I do not have to tell you that plants are universally recognized as a vital part of the world’s biological diversity and an essential resource for the planet. At the same time, I do not have to tell you that agricultural biodiversity is now 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. 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.

Worryingly, our reliance on so few crops makes human populations that much more vulnerable to climate change, which is already 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, highlighted that last year's 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.

Given all of this, the adoption of the Nagoya Protocol, with its strong links to the ITPGRFA, is a huge step in the right direction. Opened for signature in early February, the Protocol currently has 6 signatories. We need this number to rapidly grow, just as we need to continue to develop our strategic collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization and the ITPGRFA.

The time for action is now, with the UN General Assembly having declared 2011-2020 the International Decade of Biodiversity. Now is the time to build on the outcomes of Nagoya for our mutual benefit and the benefit of all life on Earth.

I therefore urge you to attend the side-event to be held at lunch time today (Monday 14 March) in room Hibiscus where a briefing on the Nagoya Protocol will be presented, with lunch provided.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The economist and former Indonesian environment minister Emil Salim has stated, "Before we open up an area for development, we must sit down and analyze the capacity of the land and other resources we really have. Why? Because it is the ecosystem, not the economic system, that should be the main consideration."

I am glad to say that the Nagoya Protocol and the ITPGRFA are part a new world order that recognizes the true contribution of biodiversity to human prosperity. They are part of a new world order that does not pit economic interests against environmental ones, but rightly sees them as two sides of the same coin.

With this in mind, I hope that during this meeting we will be able to find ways to enhance our collaboration over the course of this 2011-2020 International Decade of Biodiversity so as to successfully achieve our common mandate: the preservation of life on Earth. Indeed with the costs of inaction clearly outweighing the cost of action, I hope that during this meeting we remember President Yudhoyono's words those three years ago here in Bali and continue to find ways to invest the necessary resources for our common future.

Thank you for your kind attention.