



**STATEMENT  
on behalf of  
AHMED DJOGHLAF  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
of the  
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

**at the Eighth Plenary Session of the**

**GROUP ON EARTH OBSERVATIONS (GEO-VIII)**

***16-17 November 2011  
Istanbul, Turkey***

*Please check against delivery*

This is a statement on behalf of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Chair,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year, 2010, was the International Year of Biodiversity. The year ended with the adoption in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. It is a plan not just for the Convention on Biological Diversity but a plan that depends on the contribution of all stakeholders who recognize that life on Earth is dependent upon healthy ecosystems, thriving populations of species and genetic variability, or in short: biodiversity.

The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets are extremely ambitious. They reflect the urgency to act in a coherent and decisive manner to continue securing environmental services upon which humanity depends. They recognize that this decade, the UN Decade for Biodiversity, is critical for the future of our planet. Urgent action needs to be taken now in areas where this is possible. At the same time long term plans must be developed and implemented to put us on a path that avoids catastrophic consequences for the Earth system. Achieving the objectives of the Convention, the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the fair and equitable sharing of genetic resources, is vital for the future of our planet. It is equally vital to pursue the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in close coordination with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. The problems addressed by the three Rio Conventions, biodiversity loss, climate change and land degradation, cannot be solved in isolation as the causes underlying these problems are the same.

The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 therefore recognizes the need for integrating biodiversity values into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies and planning processes as well as into national accounting as well as the need for people to be aware of the values of biodiversity. Addressing some of the root causes of biodiversity loss, while at the same time taking direct action, by reducing pressures and safeguarding biodiversity, would put us on the path towards the vision of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity: "Living in Harmony with Nature" where "By 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people."

However it is clear that, as vital as it is, implementing the Strategic Plan will not be easy. It will be impossible if data and know-how is not put to the best use. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 therefore also includes support mechanisms: Capacity-building for effective national action; Clearing-house mechanism and technology transfer; Financial resources; Partnerships and initiatives to enhance cooperation; Support mechanisms for research, monitoring and assessment.

The Group on Earth Observations can make significant contributions here, and this has already been recognized by various bodies of the Convention. The Convention is a participating organization of GEO and in 2008 signed a memorandum of understanding with the GEO-Secretariat to collaborate in supporting science-based decision-making, promoting the gathering, analysis and dissemination of biodiversity data and information, improving the scientific understanding of the status and trends of, and threats to, biodiversity, including the drivers of change, and encouraging interaction amongst scientists and decision makers.

In 2008 the CBD COP-9 took note of the establishment of GEO-BON as part of the GEOSS implementation and encouraged wide participation in the network.

CBD COP-10 in 2010 invited GEO-BON to evaluate existing observation capabilities relevant to the targets contained in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. The evaluation report served as an input to an expert meeting tasked with proposing indicators for the Strategic Plan.

And just last week the fifteenth meeting of the Convention's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice reviewed the indicators and underlying information and welcomed the contribution made by GEO-BON. SBSTTA also recognized the role of GEO-BON in pursuing work on the further development of technical information on indicators among other things and invited GEO-BON to continue its work on the identification of essential biodiversity variables and the development of associated data sets.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With these remarks I have tried to highlight the contribution being made by GEO-BON, and GEO at large, to strengthening our capability of monitoring and assessing biodiversity. The Convention has recognized this contribution. But the technical needs required by many countries, including countries that are particularly rich in biodiversity is much greater and these countries have not yet seen how GEO-BON can help to mobilize and connect observation data so that they can be used for the kind of planning processes described in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. I therefore urge you to direct and enable GEO-BON and its regional networks to work as a priority on the delivery of concrete products that can demonstrate the power of making full use of Earth observations.

Thank you.

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