



MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

MR. BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS

on the occasion of

WEEDS ACROSS BORDERS 2020 -MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF THE FUTURE

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Crop productivity depends upon our ability to cultivate selected plant species and control those which hinder their growth. The latter have become commonly known as “weeds.” When they are of non-native origin, we refer to them as “invasive alien plants.” Invasive alien plants are not only a threat to our food systems, but can also have a substantial negative impact on native biodiversity and ecosystem function. This makes invasive alien plants – weeds – an important issue for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Under the Convention, Parties have agreed to prevent the introduction of, control or eradicate, those alien species which threaten ecosystems, habitats or species, as far as possible and as appropriate. Invasive alien plants do not abide by political boundaries. Mexico, the United States, and Canada took a step to work together to protect the region’s native flora and fauna. Through the exchange of scientific and technical information, collaboration on specific projects, and building the capacity of key institutions, we can make substantial progress on this issue. It is important that we work in partnership to identify and achieve tangible goals. The Conference of the Parties to the CBD urged Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to implement “the Guiding Principles for the prevention, introduction and mitigation of impacts of alien species that threaten ecosystems, habitats or species” in 2002 and continued promotion for the reduction of the threats to biodiversity caused by invasive alien species.

Aichi Target 9 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 was adopted by the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD. This provides a useful starting point for all stakeholders of biodiversity, including the plant protection community. The CBD and the International Plant Protection Convention are working closely with relevant international organizations which set international standards and guidance to address invasive alien species. The Secretariats of the CBD and IPPC, working through the FAO, are supporting this through a Memorandum of Cooperation supported by a Joint Work Programme.

Target 9 specifically states: “By 2020, invasive alien species and pathways are identified and prioritized, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and measures are in place to manage pathways to prevent their introduction and establishment.” To achieve this target relevant governments need to work together through regional bodies such as the North American Plant Protection Organization (NAPPO). As part of their response, governments can also explore the need to further strengthen attention to invasive alien plants in their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) or equivalent policy instruments.

Charles Darwin remarked, “In the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.” In order to effectively protect biodiversity



from invasive alien plants, we need to become experts at collaboration and well-informed improvisation. We need to see ourselves as having a decisive role in determining the history of human kind that we are now writing through our daily actions.

Today, I call upon all to see “weeds across borders” as a shared problem calling for a shared response and urgent action. The CBD encourages you to make a difference - collectively. You have our support.