



Statement by Mr Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias

Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity

On the occasion of

**The sixteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific,
Technical and Technological Advice
(SBSTTA-16)**

on

30 April 2012, in Montreal

Madam Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the sixteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice. Welcome back to Montreal.

At each previous meeting of SBSTTA, I heard the Executive Secretary or the Chair say that the agenda was particularly heavy and that we needed to be particularly disciplined and collegial to work our way through all items. Now that I am sitting on the podium, answerable to you all and accountable for a positive outcome, I feel this is particularly true for the meeting this week.

Madam Chair,

You have already highlighted some of the important issues that are in front of us this week. And as you have underlined, the focus of the work of the Subsidiary Body is on the scientific and technical aspects of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. Ultimately, this advice is to guide and support Parties towards delivering our agreed global biodiversity agenda. We have a lot to live up to the historic commitments made in Nagoya at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and your deliberations this week can help to resolve some of the scientific and technical questions and thereby reveal ways towards the achievement of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

The Subsidiary Body should therefore focus its attention on providing guidance to the scientific and technical issues that otherwise hamper our ability to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and to contribute effectively to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity in our respective countries.

Allow me to add my thoughts to what you have already said, focusing on a few key areas which we may want to keep in mind during the deliberations this week and in your preparatory work for the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties:

Firstly, we need to promote more effective technical and scientific cooperation among Parties, as committed by Parties in Article 18 and in the work programme on technology transfer. We should continue to explore how to make more active use of existing mechanisms such as the clearing-house mechanism and others, or how to improve them to promote the more effective and regular exchange of knowledge and experiences among Parties, including both North-South and South-South cooperation. In this context, I warmly welcome your initiative, Madame Chair, to organize a round-table discussion on practical ways to facilitate technical and scientific cooperation in support of the implementation of the Convention and look forward to practical ideas and suggestions on how we can move forward in this regard.

A second and related point I would like to make is the urgent need for improved scientific evidence of the consequences of biodiversity loss for the functioning of ecosystems, their ability to deliver goods and services, and for our livelihoods and well-being. Despite the sobering picture and dire predictions, for example in the third edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook, I do not see the necessary actions being taken at the required scale that is called for. In part, I believe, the reason is still prevailing scepticism with regard to the need to curb biodiversity loss as well as sufficient proof that the kinds of actions we undertake in implementing the Convention and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity are the right ones to take us into a future in which we live in harmony with nature.

Here is what I see as a major obstacle towards improving the scientific evidence of the consequences of biodiversity loss: We do have a wealth of scientific publications; we have data sets in different places, formats and qualities; we have generally underfunded and understaffed institutions that do what they can to catalogue, collect and monitor biodiversity, to protect and manage our natural resources in the light of the continued pressure on biodiversity from direct and indirect drivers; and we have ministries tasked to use all this information and report on it on a regular basis. And it seems that each time we have to report on biodiversity we start afresh, looking across sources of information, looking for institutions that hold and analyse data, looking for comparable information over time that allows us to

understand the reasons for trends we might see, looking for models that fill temporal and spatial gaps in our data coverage, looking for projections into the future that enable us to plan ahead and make the right choices. And every time we are overburdened by this task and therefore report a lot of general and qualitative information and very little actual data on precise issues that we need to consider.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We must urgently put in place a continuous monitoring system for the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. This will need enhanced commitment and the participation of all Parties and partners. It will require making observations relevant to biodiversity on a systematic basis and with the necessary frequency and resolution, managing this information so that it can be used for assessments and for deriving indicators, improving our models and for making better projections. We also need to produce the right information which will be used by the broadest constituency and which we can draw upon for national biodiversity assessments and for the next and future editions of the Global Biodiversity Outlook. We therefore need to allocate to networks such as the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership and the GEO Biodiversity Observation Network, amongst others, the resources necessary to do their jobs in such a way that it is most useful to countries and biodiversity managers.

I strongly believe that unless we are able to monitor biodiversity in an adequate way, we will not be able to manage our biodiversity in a satisfactory manner and we will fail to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

A piece of good news is that ten days ago, in Panama, it was agreed that we will have an ally in the generation, compilation and interpretation of the biodiversity science: IPBES, the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services has been established and it will assist us by carrying out assessments, generating knowledge, contributing to capacity-building and developing policy support tools and methodologies. All this is urgently needed so that we can establish cost-effective systems to collect the right kinds of data, feed these into systems that ensure their continued availability for future comparison and analyses, and draw on these to inform our policies and management decisions. Let us therefore think very carefully how SBSTTA and IPBES can collaborate and interact in a practical and pragmatic way so that biodiversity comes out as the winner.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I intend to emphasize, promote and support, as part of my tenure as Executive Secretary of our Convention, the establishment of functioning monitoring systems that give us the confidence that we make the right decisions about our natural environment and that provide us with evidence of the effectiveness of the measures we undertake in implementing the Convention and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. I am convinced that enhanced technical and scientific cooperation will enable us to achieve this goal. Let us not get distracted by the complexity of the CBD portfolio and focus on facilitating implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 at all levels and in collaboration with our partners and partner processes. We need to aim for better integration of our work programmes and cross-cutting initiatives, while exploring synergies within the Convention on Biological Diversity and with other conventions, particularly opportunities for mainstreaming biodiversity into other sectors. Biodiversity needs to be promoted as a solution to achieve broader societal goals, not as a problem.

Please be assured of my commitment to provide the best support for the work of the Convention and to mobilize the support to Parties for the full implementation of our commitments under the Convention.

With these remarks I wish you constructive deliberations and a successful outcome at the end of this week.

I thank you for your attention.
