



## STATEMENT

*by*

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

*on the occasion of the*

**INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

*22 May 2012*

*Hotel GRT, Chennai, India*

Honourable Minister,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

The International Day for Biological Diversity is a special occasion to reflect on the role of biodiversity for our lives, and for all living things on our planet. It is an honour to be here to celebrate this Day at the great coastal city of Chennai and to think forward to the work we will be doing together with the Government of India in preparation for the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and beyond.

This year, the focus of the International Day is on marine and coastal biodiversity.

We know that the biodiversity of the marine and coastal ecosystems of our world is essential to the well-being and livelihoods of many coastal communities. But the marine ecosystems of the world provide all kinds of benefits for millions of people who may not think that they have any strong reliance on the ocean.

These benefits are many: Fisheries provide over 15 per cent of animal protein in the global diet. Intact and resilient coastal ecosystems protect inland dwellers from the ravages of the sea. Substances derived from the sea are key to many products – creams, paint, paper and medicines. Tiny marine plants called phytoplankton release half of all oxygen in the atmosphere.

It is obvious that the protection of marine ecosystems around the world is crucial to human well-being. However, as the slogan for the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties says – “Nature protects if she is protected”. It is up to us to keep our end of the bargain.

The Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity have committed themselves to a series of specific goals aimed to provide this protection. Under the Jakarta Mandate and the resultant programme of work on marine and coastal biodiversity, Governments will, among others, develop, encourage, enhance and implement wide-ranging integrated marine and coastal area management (IMCAM) and includes a broad suite of measures at all levels of society.

At the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan, in 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity, Governments agreed to a Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. This Plan and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets include several specific and relevant targets for marine and coastal areas. They address issues such as the sustainable harvest of fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants, the establishment of greater levels of protection for coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, and the need to minimize, by 2015, the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification. This commitment of the global community and the adoption of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Arising from Their Utilization demonstrated that the world is ready to protect nature in the interest of all.

There is no question that the goals set by the Parties are ambitious, but they have to be met, as time is running out. Even as we are continuing to learn much about the environments and wildlife that inhabit our seas and coasts, the threats they face are clear, and the solutions are available. The longer the delay, the more difficult solutions become to implement.

Governments have moved to support the agreements made at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. They have begun to create, implement and revise their national biodiversity strategies and action plans, taking into account, the needs of marine and coastal ecosystems where appropriate, all while working to bring stakeholders into the process. Governments are also taking the major steps towards mobilizing the resources needed to implement the Strategic Plan.

In addition, Governments are also taking the steps needed to ratify the Nagoya Protocol. Last week Mexico deposited its instrument of ratification to the Protocol, becoming the first of the

so-called megadiverse countries to do so and bringing the number of countries that have already ratified this important legal instrument to five. Over the course of the next few months, many more are expected to follow suit. The upcoming meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Nagoya Protocol, generously hosted by the Government of India, will be an opportunity to build momentum towards fulfilling the third objective of the Convention.

Let me conclude with call for continued action in support of biodiversity, not only today, on the International Day for Biodiversity, but every day. Nature has done her part in protecting us. Now, let us do our part and return the favour.

I thank you for your attention.

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