



**STATEMENT BY BRAULIO F. DE SOUZA DIAS
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY**
on the occasion of the
65th SESSION OF THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
21–26 May 2012, Geneva

Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to convey to you my observations in the context of the sixty-fifth session of the World Health Assembly and to assure you that the Convention on Biological Diversity is committed to strengthening its collaborative work with the World Health Organization in all areas of mutual interest. The indisputable value of biodiversity to human health and well-being was highlighted by the World Health Organization in the Health Synthesis of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, and the inter-linkages between global environmental change and human health in the World Health Assembly resolution 61.19, which recognizes climate change as a direct threat to human health. In the lead up to Rio +20 and beyond, there is a need to emphasize these inter-linkages by promoting greater public awareness and by leveraging our partnerships to generate innovative solutions to biodiversity loss, ones that will halt the ensuing degradation of the ecosystems upon which our health and well-being depend.

Biodiversity can be considered as the foundation for human health. Biodiversity underpins the functioning of the ecosystems on which we depend for our food and fresh water; aids in regulating climate, floods and diseases; provides recreational benefits and offers aesthetic and spiritual enrichment. Biodiversity also contributes to local livelihoods, medicines (traditional and modern) and economic development. Human health ultimately depends on ecosystem services that are made possible by biodiversity and the products derived from them.

At the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2010, the CBD adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, comprised of five strategic goals and twenty targets. In a related decision (X/20) the Conference of the Parties noted the need to investigate how the implementation of the Strategic Plan could best support efforts to address global health issues, and, as such, facilitate consideration of biodiversity in national health strategies in line with the 1998 World Health Declaration, and in support of the Millennium Development Goals.

There is promise that 2012 will be a landmark year for progress toward achieving these objectives. The first workshop on the inter-linkages between biodiversity and health jointly convened by the WHO and CBD in April this year underscored the importance of maintaining

healthy ecosystems to address a broad range of human health issues, including several addressed during this Assembly; ranging from poverty reduction and the monitoring of health-related Millennium Development Goals to access to essential medicines including natural medicines and from containment of infectious diseases to the impacts of climate change on human health and the prevention of non-communicable diseases.

More recently, the CBD's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice made a recommendation welcoming strengthened collaboration between the CBD and the World Health Organization and calling for the establishment of a joint work programme with the WHO and related organizations to support the contribution that the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 can make to achieving human health objectives. The recommendation also called for the further development of indicators relevant to the linkages between biodiversity and human health and encouraging governments to make use of them.

It remains critical for each of our organizations to address issues such as climate change, water, nutrition, disease, and traditional medicine in a mutually supportive way. Sustained and productive cooperation between the CBD and the WHO is fundamental to achieving the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its related Aichi Targets, several of which are relevant to human health and biodiversity. The varied threats to the ecosystem services upon which human health and well-being depend need to be met with the maximum response from both health and biodiversity experts, policy-makers, law enforcement agencies, and practitioners. The CBD views our initial jointly organized workshop and other collaborative activities underway with the WHO as a very positive step in this direction. I look forward to continued collaboration between our organizations to address these common objectives of a healthy planet and healthy people.

With these remarks I would like to wish you successful deliberations and look forward to the outcomes of your meeting.

Thank you.