



**STATEMENT BY BRAULIO F. DE SOUZA DIAS
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY**

at the opening of the

Global Biodiversity Informatics Conference

2-4 July 2012

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The world community is grappling with the question of how to ensure the social and economic well-being of a growing population while at the same time sustaining the natural environment on which we depend. And during times of economic uncertainty and hardship as we are currently living them our decisions tend to focus on short-term fixes that are often at the expense of ecosystems and the biodiversity they harbour. What is apparently being forgotten when such decisions are made is that we borrow from nature's credit card at a very high interest rate and that this credit has to be paid back eventually. The point will come where we can no longer increase our credit line. And the sooner we get serious about paying back this credit, principal and interest, the easier it will be.

The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets offers ways in which we as societies can act to reduce the debt to nature: directly through species conservation, establishing and managing protected areas or through the restoration of degraded ecosystems as well as indirectly, by addressing pressures on biodiversity and the underlying causes. Unfortunately, the plan is mostly understood as costing Government and societies even more money at a time where they wonder how to pay the services and commitments that people expect them to deliver. If we are unable to demonstrate that implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity is a wise investment rather than a luxurious expenditure we will find in 2020 that we have failed to achieve it.



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

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Colleagues,

We need to explain the logic of using scarce resources for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity at a time where this is lower on the list of priorities of many Governments and individuals than it may have been some years ago. And to do that we need arguments. We need facts. We need information.

I am convinced that the lack of adequate biodiversity monitoring is at the heart of our difficulties to make convincing arguments. A Government that sees what its policies do to biodiversity because it has access to reliable data will be less likely to risk biodiversity loss and more likely to find solutions that embrace biodiversity as a part of such solutions. Collectively, we have to ensure as a priority that biodiversity observations are made at the resolution and frequency that is necessary to enable detecting trends and that the data are managed in such a way that they are available and compatible to determine these trends. And we have to ensure that we have the necessary complementary information that enables us to interpret these trends, to understand their causes and to support analyses of options to reverse undesired trends.

Since its adoption, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 has been embraced as a framework guiding the agenda of a number of biodiversity-related processes and organizations. I am pleased to see that you are using it as a basis for your discussions on ways in which GBIF can enhance its services to the biodiversity community. Let me encourage you in your work over the coming three days to consider not just the species-related targets but the entire Strategic Plan and to develop a road map towards a GBIF that, together with its partners, manages data and information on all aspects of that Plan. A GBIF that is the primary data hub for global biodiversity indicators and a GBIF with nodes that service countries and regions in this regard. In short, a GBIF that services the needs of the user community.

I am convinced that GBIF needs an ambitious plan, a plan that shows GBIF's role in a system that offers sufficient, credible and relevant information about biodiversity and a system that offers this information immediately so that it can be taken into account as decisions at all levels are being made. I wish you success in drawing up such a plan over the coming days, weeks and months and look forward to seeing the Global Biodiversity Information Outlook being present to COP-11 in Hyderabad.

Thank you.

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias
Executive Secretary
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