



**Statement by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological
Diversity**

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**Convention on
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Distinguished delegates, colleagues and friends,

Thank you very much for your kind invitation to attend and address this important meeting as we mark 30 years of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

As you know, there is a long history of cooperation between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, including its Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Most recently, this has taken the form of a Joint Work Plan for the period 2011-2020.

The Joint Work Plan was welcomed at the thirteenth meeting of this Commission and at the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Hyderabad, India in October 2012. The eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties also stressed the importance of further strengthening collaboration between the Convention and the FAO in meeting relevant Aichi Biodiversity Targets, particularly in the context of achieving food security and in respect of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from its Utilization. I am very pleased to note this high-level recognition of the importance of our collaboration.

The central theme of our Joint Work Plan is the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020) and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. It aims to continue the effective working relationship between the secretariats in addressing the work that is required of them by their respective governing bodies. The focus is on key areas of work and flexible mechanisms to achieve this. Current agreed areas of joint work include:

- (a) Assessments, and specifically the cooperation toward the preparation of global assessment for the State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture;
- (b) Targets and indicators;
- (c) Access and benefit-sharing;
- (d) Best practices for the on-farm and *in-situ* management of agricultural biodiversity and for enhancing ecosystem services;
- (e) Enhancing implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 at the national level; and
- (f) Climate change and genetic resources for food and agriculture.

I would like to share with you that, in September 2012, through an exchange of letters, the Director-General of FAO and I have agreed on several areas for enhanced cooperation between FAO and CBD to promote biodiversity for food security and sustainable production, based on proposals from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Inter-departmental Working Group on Biodiversity of FAO, and building on the ongoing excellent collaboration between the two organizations, including initiatives such as the "Save and Grow" and the "Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems".

I note that all these are important topics for discussion at this meeting, under various agenda items.

Regarding assessments:

These are of critical importance. Without knowledge on the status and trends of genetic resources, we are unable to manage them properly and therefore food security is compromised.

I particularly welcome the inclusion of *Aquatic* genetic resources in the Multi-Year Programme of Work, and recent work contributing to commencing the assessment, since I recognize this as an important gap.

I would also like to congratulate the decision of the Commission to prepare a first State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture, considering all components and aspects of biodiversity which are important for food and agriculture, including the provision of ecosystem services. This report will be an important milestone in the Decade on Biodiversity.

Of course, it will be essential that adequate financial and other resources are mobilized to effectively undertake all the assessments within the required timelines.

Regarding targets and indicators:

The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity has consistently highlighted the important role of FAO and the Commission regarding the development and use of international indicators for biodiversity for food and agriculture. Most recently, at its eleventh meeting, the Conference of the Parties invited FAO to contribute to assessing progress towards the achievement of relevant Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

The progress with consideration of targets and indicators by the sixth session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture has been noted by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity as a useful contribution.

The Aichi Biodiversity Targets represent an internationally agreed flexible framework within which national targets and priorities should be set. In this regard, I wish to highlight the important role that FAO can play in assisting the setting of national targets relevant to food and agriculture. FAO has considerable strategic advantage in assisting national governments in the identification of priority actions and in helping them to set voluntary time-bound targets to achieve these. We will also continue to collaborate with FAO regarding further integrating and harmonizing national strategies for food, nutrition and agriculture and national biodiversity strategies and action plans, including integrating the global plans of action on plant and animal genetic resources for food and agriculture into these, so they become fully mutually reinforcing approaches.

FAO is a primary source of knowledge relevant to monitoring biodiversity, food and agriculture in its broadest sense and including farming, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture and the food products from forests. It is also the custodian of numerous important databases on the topic. These extend well beyond genetic resources and include, for example, critical datasets on land and water use, soil, forests, agriculture production, trade and social and economic aspects. As reported in the background documentation of the current Commission meeting, some good monitoring work has been done by FAO specifically on biodiversity, including through its contribution to the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (BIP).

Time is of the essence. It is already 2013. There were significant difficulties in assessing progress towards the previous 2010 biodiversity target. I am concerned that we do not repeat this. I am confident that you will agree that food and agriculture are areas where we need the best possible monitoring system in place.

Of course, targets and indicators are also relevant to the important work being undertaken regarding the preparation of the various assessments of the State of the World's Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The first of these assessments undertaken for each category of genetic resources has provided - and will provide - us with a good baseline. But these assessments need to be able to better differentiate, and as far as possible quantify, the changes and trends over time. Experience so far suggests that difficulties remain in generating clear information on trends. The timelines for the forest and aquatic animal genetic resources will obviously severely limit their utility for assessing trends in a timely fashion before 2020. I am well aware of the complex nature of these assessments and do not underestimate the work required. I remain grateful for your continuing efforts and support your resolve to strengthen knowledge of what we are trying to manage.

Regarding micro-organisms and invertebrates:

I note the decision of the 12th Regular Session of the Commission to include further work on microorganisms and invertebrates and the intersessional work of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Groups in this area.

There are significant threats to, and opportunities, for restoring genetic resources that support ecosystem services that are essential for sustainable food security. Some of these topics are touched upon in the background information provided for this meeting (for example, invertebrates in rice production and root and tuber crop-based systems) and I note the previous attention given by the Commission to other topics such as the critical importance of pollinators and soil biodiversity to sustainable agriculture, as well as the contribution of biodiversity to pest and disease regulation.

I note the relevance of the international initiatives already adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity on soil biodiversity and pollinators, to these discussions and you can count on our continued collaboration and support in these areas as well.

Another important area is the key issues and linkages between biodiversity and nutrition:

As already recognized by many, the concept of food security needs to also embrace nutrition security. I am pleased to see the background documentation on this topic, and I would recall the relevance of the international initiative on biodiversity for food and nutrition adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Moving on to climate change and genetic resources for food and agriculture:

Needless to say, this is an increasingly urgent area of work. I look forward to your discussions on the proposed roadmap or programme of work. At this juncture, I can only reinforce the observation that the needs and opportunities go well beyond building resilience and adaptability through crop and livestock genetic resources. Climate change primarily impacts the ecosystems upon which food production depends. There are significant opportunities for biodiversity to be conserved, or in most cases restored, in order to enhance the ecosystem services upon which resilient agriculture depends. A case in point is soils where improved soil health, underpinned by biodiversity, would not only help stem land degradation and improve farm productivity, but simultaneously build resilience to climate change through, for example, improved regulation of water and nutrient cycles, as well as boosting soil organic carbon content, thus also helping with climate-change mitigation. These are mutually reinforcing outcomes.

I also draw your attention to further opportunities to look at agriculture in a landscape setting. There are significant ways to enhance production and resilience of food systems by co-managing farming, livestock and forestry, at their different scales and integrated with other land uses. Landscape diversity, including food and agriculture diversity, is a highly desirable goal in itself but particularly under a changing climate. For example, protected or community conserved forested areas within a landscape can provide significant ecosystem services for farmers and livestock such as pollination, improved water supplies and regulation of local climate, including reduced heat stress on crops and livestock. Moreover, improved resilience of food production systems within a landscape can also contribute to reducing risks from weather-related disasters such as floods, droughts and landslides.

Your Secretariat has kindly shared with us the work on genetic resources, agriculture and climate change. I intend to build on the opportunities this topic offers to the two secretariats to further strengthen our efforts in this area.

And lastly – regarding access and benefit-sharing:

The implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from its Utilization creates opportunities for developing an economy based on sustainable development. The Nagoya Protocol can help increase knowledge of the value of natural resources, create incentives for preserving genetic diversity, and biodiversity in general, while providing the conditions for continuous research and development on genetic resources.

As of today, sixteen countries have ratified or acceded to the Nagoya Protocol. This represents one-third of the 50 ratifications that are needed for entry into force. We are also aware that a number of countries are in the process of completing their internal procedures towards ratification. The third meeting of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Committee for the Nagoya Protocol will take place in the Republic of Korea, in February of 2014. We are confident that the Protocol will enter into force in time for the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, to be hosted by the Republic of Korea in October 2014. I strongly encourage countries to expedite their process for ratifying or acceding to the Nagoya Protocol to ensure they can sit as Parties during the discussions to take place at MOP-1.

The Joint Work Plan between our two Secretariats provides for collaboration to promote and support the entry into force, development and implementation of the Nagoya Protocol and eventually, where desirable, the development of specialized instruments for the food and agriculture sector.

The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity has closely followed developments related to access and benefit-sharing under the Commission, in particular discussions at its thirteenth meeting, and also participated as an observer in the Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing, organized in Svalbard, Norway in September 2012. The report of that meeting was made available to the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Hyderabad, India.

We look forward to continued close collaboration with the Commission regarding further developments on the issue of access and benefit-sharing and genetic resources for food and agriculture over the next biennium, with a view to ensure complementarities and mutual supportiveness. In that regard, I note that the Working Group on ABS for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture has made a number of recommendations to the Commission concerning collaboration with the Convention on Biological Diversity on ABS issues in areas such as awareness-raising and capacity-building and I look forward to working with you on the activities you may decide to undertake.

The secretariats of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and of the Convention on Biological Diversity also continue to work closely together. Further to the Memorandum of Understanding signed at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties between the two Secretariats, we launched a Joint Initiative of cooperation at the margins of the Rio+20 Earth Summit regarding activities in support of the ratification of the Nagoya Protocol and its harmonious implementation with the Treaty and its Multilateral System for Access and Benefit-sharing.

I was very pleased to travel to Brazil earlier this year, with the Secretary of the International Treaty, where we had the opportunity to present to the Government and stakeholders how the International Treaty and the Nagoya Protocol can be mutually supportive.

Distinguished delegates, colleagues and friends,

At the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, in June last year, the Heads of States have endorsed the outcome document “The Future We Want”, which contains a call for more sustainable development policies with a balanced consideration of the economic, social and environmental pillars of human well-being. The United Nations resolutions adopted last December established several consultation processes to review the Millennium Development Goals, establish a set of Sustainable Development Goals, and establish a Development Agenda post 2015, including a funding strategy. I believe this offers a unique opportunity for a renewed commitment and strategy to promote food and nutrition security, including through win-win partnerships between the sectors of the environment and agriculture, and in particular cooperation led by CBD and FAO and its Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

Further details of the linkages between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the work of the Commission, and reports of specific activities of our two secretariats, are provided in the background information that has been prepared for this meeting. We are all acutely aware of the challenges facing sustainable food and nutrition security and of the role of genetic resources in meeting these challenges. I firmly believe that our greatest opportunities lie in the identification and mainstreaming of solutions that

deliver win-win outcomes for all. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets has such an approach at its heart. I would like to inform you of my commitment to strengthen a broad range of partnerships for *in-situ* conservation of agrobiodiversity in support of food security, nutritious diets and livelihoods.

Many of these opportunities are already identified by the Commission, and a considerable number are before you for further consideration at this meeting. We should not underestimate our existing knowledge of how to achieve sustainability, and I applaud the successes being achieved by the Commission, FAO and other organizations, farmers, local communities and the private sector. We have a good starting point. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and I, personally, commit fully to supporting our joint efforts towards the collective goal of a food- and nutrition-secure world. I wish you a successful and fruitful meeting.

Thank you.

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias
Executive Secretary