



STATEMENT BY

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

to the

NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON INDICATORS AND NBSAP FOR IRAQ

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**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

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In October 2009, Iraq became the 192nd Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity, showing its commitment to maintain its rich biological diversity and participation in international environmental affairs in spite of the enormous socio-political challenges the country still faces.

At the time of Iraq's accession to the Convention, my predecessor as Executive Secretary, Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, was quoted as saying: "Iraq's accession to the Convention on Biological Diversity is testimony to their commitment to protect biodiversity in spite of the huge challenges currently facing the Government and its citizens," and he promised that the Secretariat would support the necessary capacity-building to develop a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, in accordance with Article 6 of the Convention. I am therefore delighted that finally, "under my watch", and with the support of the Japan Biodiversity Fund, we are now able to contribute to this training meeting to further develop the NBSAP for Iraq.

However, the absence of an NBSAP does not mean that no actions to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity have been occurring in Iraq. Even before joining the Convention, Iraq has been collaborating with UNEP and technical experts funded by Japan and Italy, to restore the Iraqi Marshlands, their ecological viability and rebuild sustainable livelihoods for the Marsh Arabs. My understanding is that Iraq is now working towards making the Marshlands a National Park and gaining its listing as a World Heritage Site. And, of course, our good friend, Dr Ali Lami, has played a key role in this large and complex restoration project.

I am very pleased to know that my Secretariat staff is able to contribute to developing a practical strategy and action plan for biodiversity that will ensure that "natural capital" continues to contribute to the well-being of the Iraqi population as we move towards a post-oil bio-economy that will need to make optimal use of renewable biological resources, draws inspiration from and utilizes, the diversity of nature in the design of smart materials and even buildings.

There are now 2741 days left before we will know, collectively, as a Convention, whether we have achieved our Strategic Mission, agreed in Nagoya, Japan in 2010, to "take effective and urgent action to halt the loss of biodiversity in order to ensure that by 2020 ecosystems are resilient and continue to provide essential services, thereby securing the planet's variety of life, and contributing to human well-being, and poverty eradication."

This ambitious global mission can only be achieved if individual Parties manage to slow the loss of biodiversity at national level and this will only be achieved through a concerted effort across all sectors of the economy and with broad public support and participation.

I trust that the next 4 days here in Amman, Jordan will make a significant contribution to building capacity for the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 in Iraq and I look forward to hearing the feedback from the workshop from my representative at the meeting.