



United Nations Decade on Biodiversity

**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
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on the occasion of the
UNITED NATIONS DAY FOR SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION
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It is time for the international community to work towards harnessing the benefits of South-South and triangular cooperation as a complement to North-South arrangements. For developing countries, continued biodiversity loss poses a clear risk to the quality of life, security and the health of their citizens. However, due to the increased capacity of developing countries we now, and over the next years, have the opportunity to promote enhanced South-South scientific and technical cooperation. This is crucial for promoting access to biodiversity-related technical and technology solutions and will enable us to collaboratively achieve the environment and development goals, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Today's overseas development assistance and foreign direct investment follow a more complex script than just a decade ago, and there are implications as to the "common but differentiated" roles of contracting Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Middle-income Parties and other new aid providers are more influential in multilateral negotiations. Developing countries (particularly Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)) are organized in regional initiatives according to mutually agreed agendas, and seek partners rather than donors. Further, the interplay of development assistance with private investment, trade and new development actors provides new opportunities for aid to leverage private resource flows. Far from the "three worlds" - first, second and third - of before, today we see regional multi-polar spheres of influence, with several countries of the South becoming hubs for South-South and triangular exchanges and being sought out in joint ventures with partners in the North.

In spite of these changes, while more than 80 per cent of the world's biodiversity exists in the "South", most of the technological and financial means of managing, using and recovering these resources are still largely held by the "North". The limitation of access to these critical means for protecting biodiversity and sustainably using biodiversity is a big challenge for many Southern countries.

Some 70 per cent of the Parties to the CBD are developing countries, and this is where, according to the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, 80 per cent of the biodiversity conservation hotspots are located. These countries have a lot to lose should biodiversity loss continue unabated. According to The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) study by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), wetlands provide services worth about US\$3.4 billion per year to humans, yet half of the world's wetlands have disappeared since 1900. Global fisheries, capturing more than 80 million tonnes of fish per year, with an estimated value of US\$80 billion, generate around 35 million direct jobs; yet over 70 per cent of the world's fish stocks are either fully exploited or depleted. In a "business as usual" scenario, the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change suggests that 10 per cent of all species



Convention on
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on Earth risk extinction for every degree of global mean temperature increase, with some groups going extinct much faster, recalling comparisons with past cataclysmic extinction events. Additionally, the most significant threats to biodiversity, and accounting for the greatest rates of loss, are found in developing countries. The TEEB study indicates that by 2030, the current rate of loss of biodiversity may cause a decrease of more than half of the GDP of the world's poorest countries.

Developing countries share in common, many of the challenges in terms of institutional circumstances, the capacity to implement programmes and vulnerability to environmental disasters and degradation. Meanwhile, these countries also have an increasing number of experts, scientists and specialists, with a greater reservoir of intellectual capital and innovations.

South-South Cooperation was first discussed in the context of the CBD in 2006 at the request of South Africa. The Secretariat of the CBD, in collaboration with developing country Parties, experts, UNEP and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), supported the development of a Multi-Year Plan of Action for South-South Cooperation on Biodiversity for Development. The Plan was subsequently adopted on 17 October 2010 by the 131 Parties from the Group of 77 and China at the first South-South Cooperation Forum, held at the tenth meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP 10) to the Convention in Japan. In its decision at COP 10, the Conference of the Parties welcomed the Plan for South-South Cooperation as an important contribution to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and called for support for its implementation.

At its eleventh meeting (COP 11), in Hyderabad, India, the Conference of the Parties requested the Secretariat to identify coherent and integrated approaches for enhanced support and promotion of scientific and technical cooperation, and to engage in a process towards establishing a capacity-building network of national and regional centres of excellence in biodiversity to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in developing countries. They also requested support in match-making, catalysing and facilitating partnerships and regional pilot initiatives for technology transfer and scientific and technological cooperation, and agreed to reassess progress on these issues at the fifth meeting of the Convention's Working Group on the Review of Implementation (WGRI 5), to be held June 2014 in Montreal. Through these requests of the COP, the message is clear: South-South and triangular cooperation is a key approach to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Through enhanced efforts, supported by initiatives like the Global South-South Development Expo (GSSD Expo) that in 2013 will address an ambitious forward-looking agenda under the overarching theme, *Building Inclusive Green Economies: South-South Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication*, I am confident that biodiversity as strategic natural capital can be seen as a “solution” for many developing countries on their paths towards sustainable development. And based on their long-history of managing biological resources and the wisdom attained from co-existing with nature, I know that these countries in the South possess the solutions for harmonizing biodiversity and economic development. Thus I hope that the gathering and dissemination of such solutions will provide not only a reservoir of knowledge but also serve as a source of inspiration for all of us responsible for finding our own practical ways to contribute to the sustainability of our planet and the well-being of humanity.
