



STATEMENT BY

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

at the opening of

THE SUSTAINABLE OCEAN INITIATIVE (SOI)

CAPACITY-BUILDING WORKSHOP FOR EAST, SOUTH AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Guangzhou, China

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**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

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Distinguished representatives and participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to address this important workshop, the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Capacity-building Workshop for East, South and South-East Asia. This is the second regional workshop organized in the framework of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative global partnership. The first was organized in Dakar, Senegal, in February of this year, for over 70 participants from coastal West Africa.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Government of China for hosting this workshop in Guangzhou. My special thanks go to the Ministry of Environmental Protection of China as well as the South China Institute of Environmental Science for their great support and warm hospitality. My heartfelt thanks also go to various collaborators and SOI partners, including Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Environment Programme, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation of Australia, the Agence des aires marine protégées of France (French marine protected areas agency), the Fisheries Expert Group of the IUCN Commission of Ecosystem Management (IUCN-CEM), ASEAN Biodiversity Center, International Collective in Support of Fishworkers, and many others for providing valuable technical inputs and expertise in the preparation of the workshop materials. We are also very glad to have with us officials and experts from China's coastal provinces and cities, as well as relevant institutions, universities and organizations. I would like to acknowledge with great thanks the financial contribution of the Japan Biodiversity Fund, which supported the organization of this workshop.

Marine ecosystems are essential for the biogeochemical cycles that sustain all life on Earth. It is no exaggeration therefore to say that all of humanity depends on marine biodiversity. Moreover, hundreds of millions of people rely directly on marine biodiversity goods for their livelihoods. However, as communities around the world – including in many parts of Asia – strive to achieve sustainable development, they face multiple challenges due to unprecedented biodiversity loss arising from overfishing, and other unsustainable fishing practices as well as the emerging threats of global-scale climate change. Unfortunately, the oceans are also becoming a global repository of the wastes produced by various human activities, and marine biodiversity suffers from myriad threats, ranging from microplastic pollution to ocean acidification.

At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), global leaders recognized that oceans, seas and coastal areas form an integrated and essential component of the Earth's ecosystem and are critical to sustaining it. They stressed the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and seas and of their resources for sustainable development, while at the same time protecting biodiversity and the marine environment and addressing the impacts of climate change. The world then witnessed the commitment of global leaders to protect and restore the health, productivity and resilience of oceans and marine ecosystems and to maintain their biodiversity, enabling their conservation and sustainable use for present and future generations, and to effectively apply an ecosystem approach and the precautionary approach in the management of activities having an impact on the marine environment, to deliver on all three dimensions of sustainable development.

Sustainable development of our oceans will require our enhanced efforts to address the global challenges threatening the sustainability of marine biodiversity. We need to bring together all the different communities of users and stakeholders at global, regional, national, subnational and

local levels, and mainstream ecosystem-based, integrated and holistic approaches to the management of oceans.

That is why at its tenth meeting held in Nagoya, Japan, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention adopted the new Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, including 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The new Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 has since been adopted as the overarching global coordinated framework for biodiversity of the whole biodiversity family of agreements and organizations.

The Aichi Biodiversity Targets can only be achieved by building a shared vision and strong commitments toward conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity. Combined with innovative approaches for linking science with policy development and implementation through multi-stakeholder partnerships, these efforts will ensure a sustainable future for the oceans and seas of the world. In order to assist Parties to make this common vision a reality, the Sustainable Ocean Initiative was established during the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in October 2010, to develop partnerships and build capacity in support of countries in their implementation toward achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in marine and coastal areas. This SOI global partnership was further developed and consolidated by various subsequent meetings and events, including the recent ones held during the third International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC3), in Marseille, France in October this year.

This region, which hosts a diverse and extensive range of marine ecosystems spanning many important large marine ecosystems, presents a unique opportunity to operationalize the global partnerships of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative within a regional context, building upon its long-term experience in integrated ocean and coastal governance. We are glad to see that while updating their national biodiversity strategies and action plans in line with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 or developing other relevant strategies and plans, many countries in this region have included, or are considering including, national targets and actions related to marine and coastal biodiversity and ecosystems. We believe that SOI is essential for implementing these national targets and actions at the national level.

This workshop aims to help further strengthen national capacities and contribute to implementing national biodiversity strategies and action plans and other relevant national strategies and plans as well as the relevant global processes, including the work of the Convention on Biological Diversity on ecologically or biologically significant marine areas, with a view to contributing to the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

I wish you a successful and fruitful workshop and invite all the participants to join hands together under the vision of SOI.

Thank you for your attention!