



STATEMENT BY

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

at the opening of the

**Regional Workshop for Middle East and North Africa on the Preparation of the Fifth
National Report**

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**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

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Distinguished Under-Secretary of the Ministry of the Environment of Qatar, Mr.
Ahmed Bin Mohamed Al-Sadah,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,

Good morning. This is the seventh of a series of workshops organized by the CBD Secretariat to support Parties to the Convention in their preparations of the fifth national report, and this one in collaboration with UNEP Regional Office for West Asia. It complements and builds on capacity building workshops on National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, on indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and on synergies between conventions. I want to welcome you all to this event which is being made possible through the financial support from the Government of Japan and in-kind support from the Government of Qatar.

I am very grateful to the Government of Qatar, particularly to our colleagues from the Ministry of the Environment for hosting this workshop and for all their efforts in making the arrangements and facilitating your arrival to this venue.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fifth national report will provide the main source of information for taking stock of the progress made in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. The mid-term review of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets will be undertaken at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in October 2014 in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea. This review at COP 12 will provide the basis for Parties to decide on further measures to be taken to achieve the Aichi Targets by 2020.

Obviously such a review will not be possible or meaningful without a significant number of fifth national reports submitted by Parties in time. And it will depend on a frank and open discussion - first within each country and subsequently at the meeting of the Conference of the Parties - to analyse how much progress is truly being made, where the main constraints lie, and how to navigate around them. You will be aware that the deadline for submission of your fifth national report, as agreed by COP 10, is just a few months away. Bearing this in mind, I wish to strongly urge all Parties, particularly those present here, to enhance efforts to prepare this report as early as possible and submit this important report by the deadline set by COP 10.

The fourth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO 4), another focus of this workshop, will provide a basis for the mid-term review of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2011-2020 and its 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, drawing on information from the fifth national reports and other sources. It is anticipated that GBO 4 will consist of several products to be published for COP 12 and during 2015, so as to also coincide with the evaluation of the progress made in implementing the Millennium Development Goals and to enable an analysis of the contribution of biodiversity towards their achievement. Again, the timely submission of fifth national reports and other contributions and inputs from Parties will be crucial for the preparation of GBO 4.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are close to end of year three since the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 was agreed in Nagoya. By 2014, when the fifth national reports are due and when COP 12 undertakes its evaluation, we will be almost half way into the implementation of the Strategic Plan and we need to know where we stand, which measures have been taken and what is being set in motion so as to achieve the desired outcomes by 2020. The third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook showed that the world community had failed to fully achieve the 2010 Biodiversity Target, set earlier in 2002. We cannot afford to fail again. We have to urgently do those things that require immediate action - and we have to put the measures in place now that will turn around trends in biodiversity, particularly those that are slow to respond.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Middle East and North Africa is a region rich in biodiversity and biological resources, and we know that these are essential for the development of the region. Water scarcity, resource depletion, land use change, desertification, soil erosion, overpopulation and urbanization all exert significant pressures on biodiversity. Poverty in some countries is also a contributing factor to biodiversity loss. Clearly, capacities and resources for implementation of the CBD and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020) are limited but let that not be an excuse to give up and do nothing. The 25th meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment held last month in Cairo, in its Green Economy Agenda adopted, reconfirmed commitments to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and achieve Aichi Biodiversity Targets, as part of the sustainable development agenda for the Arab region.

In her opening statement the President of COP12, Ms. Jayanthi Natarajan, Minister of Environment and Forests of the Government of India, said that

particularly in light of the economic crisis, countries must invest in natural capital so as to ensure that the ecosystem services on which life on earth depends continue uninterrupted and she called Parties to commit to action to reverse biodiversity loss and thereby create a better world for future generations. I agree with Ms. Natarajan: we can no longer afford to ignore the values of biodiversity in the national balance sheets. This is echoed in the Arab Ministerial Declaration on Rio+20 Summit, which highlighted links between natural resources and biodiversity and sustainable development.

UNEP's work on the economics of biodiversity and ecosystem services and the green economy, as well as the Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services – or in brief Waves project – led by the World Bank, as well as the pilot testing of the new Experimental Environmental and Economic Accounting guidelines under the UN Statistics Division, among others, are developing the tools and capacities to bring environmental considerations into economic decision making and planning processes. They should enable us to work on a transition towards sustainability and provide a key for the development of sustainable solutions to address biodiversity loss, solutions that do not limit but are aligned with the countries' development aspirations. Together we need to demonstrate and implement ecosystem-based solutions to our social and economic challenges. Let this workshop be a contribution towards that thinking.

Having said all this, I sincerely hope that this workshop will be helpful to you all for preparing the fifth national report and contributing to GBO 4. As I have emphasized at several occasions, including at COP 11, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan need to be strengthened at various levels because they are crucial for policy making processes including national biodiversity planning and decision making. To that effect we have developed an online reporting tool that would enable Parties to review progress on a more continuous basis as a complement to the national reports. Moreover, I encourage you to see the national report as an extension of the process on updating your NBSAP in which you are all engaged, a process in which all relevant stakeholders can participate and which can be used to mobilize public support and actions for the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

In conclusion, I wish you very productive discussions over the next few days. I look forward to receiving your fifth national report before or by March 2014 and, as always, the Secretariat stands ready to support your efforts in this process.

Thank you.