



STATEMENT BY

MR. BRAULIO F. DE SOUZA DIAS

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

at the opening of the

**REGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR AFRICAN COUNTRIES
ON THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM**

and the

**COORDINATION MEETING OF THE BELGIAN PARTNERSHIP
ON THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM**

Buea, Cameroon

5-9 May 2014



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
United Nations Environment Programme
413 Saint-Jacques Street, Suite 800, Montreal, QC, H2Y 1N9, Canada
Tel : +1 514 288 2220 Fax : +1 514 288 6588
secretariat@cbd.int www.cbd.int



His Excellency, the Minister of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development,

The representative of the Government of Belgium

The Representative of the Governor of the South West Region,

Mr. Mayor of the Buea Council,

Distinguished participants and co-organizers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the two meetings taking place this week in Cameroon: the *Regional Workshop for African Countries on the Clearing-House Mechanism*, and the *Coordination Meeting of the Belgian Partnership on the Clearing-House Mechanism*.

First of all, I would like to thank the Government of Cameroon, particularly its *Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development*, for hosting these events at the foot of Mount Cameroon and for kindly making all the necessary arrangements.

Second, I would like to thank the Government of Japan for its generous financial support which has allowed the Secretariat to convene this regional capacity-building workshop as well as many others, including those on national biodiversity strategies and actions plans (NBSAPs) and on the preparation of the fifth national reports.

And third, I would like to thank the Government of Belgium for its partnership for the Clearing-House Mechanism which has been providing long-standing support to many African countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 adopted at the tenth Conference of the Parties, the long-term vision is to "live in harmony with nature". Africa is rich in biodiversity and Africans have traditionally lived in harmony with nature. Biodiversity is essential for the well-being of the continent. It contributes to the provision of food, livelihoods, income and other important ecosystem services for the people of Africa.

However, this biodiversity is at risk. In many places, it is under significant pressures due to unsustainable exploitation of resources, pollution, desertification and climate change. For these reasons, Parties have been adopting national biodiversity strategies and action plans in order to deal with these issues.

In this context, national clearing-house mechanisms have a supporting role to play in identifying relevant information and knowledge and in making it accessible to those who need it to implement the national biodiversity strategies and action plans. For instance a national clearing-house mechanism can be used to share information in the revised national biodiversity strategies and action plans and in the fifth national reports, as well as for tracking progress in the implementation of the Convention at the national level. In addition, a national clearing-house mechanism can be catalytic in engaging stakeholders and establishing partnerships.

Establishing and maintaining an effective national clearing-house mechanism is a challenging undertaking which is likely to occur step by step depending on available resources and capacity. The starting point for each country is to understand the benefits that it can gain from a national clearing-house mechanism, and to adopt a sound approach for its governance, development, and maintenance. This is the key to long-term effectiveness and sustainability, and it will be discussed during the workshop.

At this juncture, I would like to congratulate the 26 African countries that have already established their national clearing-house mechanisms, and all those in the process of establishing or further developing them. Despite limited resources, several African countries have been leading by example, including Cameroon that in 2011 established a steering committee to govern its national clearing-house mechanism and since then has been mobilizing resources on a yearly basis to sustain its operations. As always, the Secretariat stands ready to support these efforts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I sincerely hope that the meetings taking place this week will help you in developing your national clearing-house mechanism as an effective platform to support the implementation of the convention in your countries. Holding these two meetings in parallel is a great opportunity because it enables the organization of joint sessions for topics of common interest. It will allow you to share experiences, learn from each other, and seek ways to collaborate on how to face joint challenges.

In conclusion, I wish you very productive discussions over the next few days and I look forward to seeing further developments of your national clearing-house mechanisms.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.