



United Nations Decade on Biodiversity

STATEMENT BY

MR. BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

ON THE OCCASION OF

**10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT
GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE COMING INTO FORCE**

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**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



Excellencies,
Colleagues and friends,

It gives me immense pleasure to be here with you today to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the entry into force of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

As we can see in the theme for today's discussions – *Integrating plant genetic resources, data and technologies for food security, biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation in agriculture* – we have come a long way from the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, which was adopted over 30 years ago. One thing that has not changed, however, is the recognition that goals are best achieved through cooperation and mutual support. In addressing global environmental challenges, it is rare that issues are isolated; rather each issue is deeply rooted to other factors. Food security, biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation in agriculture are complex challenges requiring multifold solutions that are capable of responding to varying contexts. The relationship between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Treaty is aimed in exactly this direction.

Committed and inspired by the same ideals, the International Treaty and the Convention on Biological Diversity have worked together towards securing action on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from these rich resources. A memorandum of cooperation between our two Secretariats has formalized this harmonious relationship and establishes a framework for cooperation with a view to enhancing cooperation and exchange of information. The Secretariats are continuously working together demonstrating the concrete actions that have developed from this partnership.

This cooperation is especially crucial as the world community strives to achieve the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets that are part of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011 – 2020 adopted in Nagoya, Japan in 2010 at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. COP-10 was a critical meeting for biodiversity and the world community as it gave new impetus to multilateralism as a basis for solving our common problems. This is exemplified by the adoption of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization.

Currently, forty-two countries plus the European Union have ratified the Nagoya Protocol and we are working hard to secure the final ratifications needed in order for the Protocol to enter into force and to convene the first meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol with the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD this October in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea. Many countries have completed their domestic processes for ratification so we are confident that the Protocol will enter into force soon.

To this end, the fifth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention, held last month in Montreal, has requested the Secretariat to prepare a plan for the organization of the first meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol concurrently with COP-12, including identifying specific agenda items under the Convention and the Protocol that may benefit from consideration jointly or in close proximity to one another. This work is to be done in consultation with the Bureaux of the Conference of the Parties and the Intergovernmental Committee for the Nagoya Protocol.

I also wish to emphasize that ratification of the Nagoya Protocol and its entry into force is just the beginning of the story, not the end. Countries must also put in place the necessary measures to implement the Protocol in order for it to become truly operational and fulfil the purpose it is intended to serve and to fully meet Aichi Target 16.

Colleagues,

As most of you are aware, the Nagoya Protocol and the International Treaty have been developed in a mutually supportive manner. The Nagoya Protocol will join the International Treaty in assisting countries and indigenous and local communities to conserve and sustainably use their genetic resources which will in turn support the economy, innovation and research.

I am also very pleased that the relationship between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Treaty is a model of cooperation, mutual supportiveness and synergy.

One example is the joint briefing to the Second Committee of the United Nations General Assembly held on 30 October 2013 on the implementation of the objectives of the CBD, including actions undertaken to promote access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization and associated traditional knowledge. I was very pleased that the Secretary of the International Treaty was able to take part, along with speakers from a number of other United Nations bodies, and provide an overview of the Treaty's multilateral system of access and benefit-sharing as well as our ongoing collaborative activities. As a result, the joint briefing was noted with appreciation in the resolution on the implementation of the CBD and its contribution to sustainable development adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2013, and similar interactions were encouraged.

More recently, a tandem workshop for National Focal Points was held at FAO headquarters in Rome, organized by the ABS Capacity Development Initiative and Bioversity International in cooperation with the Secretariats of the International Treaty and the CBD. The workshop aimed at increasing the understanding of the interface between the International Treaty and the Nagoya Protocol and to encourage and facilitate discussion surrounding some of the major issues related to the harmonious implementation of both international instruments. Through engaging dialogue and interaction, participants developed practical recommendations on improving coordination and collaboration to encourage mutually supportive implementation. National Focal Points of both the International Treaty and the CBD also had the chance to meet in person which provided a welcome opportunity to engage in frank and open dialogue paving the way for improved communication and exchange between the National Focal Points of our two instruments. These are very concrete and practical steps taken to ensure we are able to jointly meet and overcome challenges and ensure the success of both the International Treaty and the Nagoya Protocol. Following the success of the workshop, participants expressed their desire to convene a follow-up workshop in the future and I hope that we will be able to provide this opportunity for focal points through our collective efforts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Looking forward towards the post-2015 development agenda, we must also keep in mind the forthcoming Sustainable Development Goals and the importance of biodiversity, food and

agriculture for achieving sustainable development in the post MDG era. The economic and social aspects of biodiversity, food and agriculture are tremendous and we are hopeful that biodiversity, food and agriculture will be recognized for their respective and entwined roles in contributing to human well-being and as such may inform these goals and their associated targets and indicators.

It is increasingly recognized that GDP (or GNP) is too narrow an indicator of human progress, in most countries, assessments of natural capital are currently limited to tangible assets such as mineral reserves, timber stocks and fish stocks. However, efforts are underway to also measure the status of ecosystems; Aichi Target 2 calls for the biodiversity values to be integrated into such national accounting systems. With this in mind, the CBD looks forward to playing a role in assisting Parties to achieve the SDGs as biodiversity is fundamental to the achievement of sustainable development.

The Updated Global Strategy for Plant Conservation 2011-2020 adopted in 2010 by the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties provides a specific vision to halt the continuing loss of plant diversity and to secure a positive, sustainable future where human activities support the diversity of plant life and where in turn the diversity of plants support and improve our livelihoods and well-being. The updated Global Strategy for Plant Conservation contains five objectives supported by 16 targets. The objectives focus on ensuring that plant diversity is well understood, conserved and used sustainably and equitably and that education and awareness about plant diversity and its importance to all life on earth is promoted alongside ensuring capacity-development and public engagement to implement the Strategy. The targets designed to achieve these objectives are closely related to our discussions today. I would like to draw attention specifically to Target 3 which states that: Information, research and associated outputs, and methods necessary to implement the Strategy are developed and shared, while Target 9 provides that: 70 percent of the genetic diversity of crops including their wild relatives and other socio-economically valuable plant species are conserved, while respecting, preserving and maintaining associated indigenous and local knowledge. Noble targets such as these can only be achieved through our mutual cooperation and exchange of knowledge.

I stress the importance for all countries to fully implement this updated strategy to ensure that societies around the world will be able to continue to rely upon plants for ecosystem goods and services, including food, medicines, clean water, climate amelioration, productive landscapes, energy sources and a healthy atmosphere.

In working towards the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, target 13 comes to mind, that: By 2020, the genetic diversity of cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and of wild relatives, including other socio-economically as well as culturally valuable species, is maintained, and strategies have been developed and implemented for minimizing genetic erosion and safeguarding their genetic diversity. As technology continues to advance, we must capitalize on these fast-paced opportunities to ensure that biodiversity benefits from innovative technological advances rather being deteriorated by them. As suggested by target 13, this needs to be done both through collective efforts to develop strategies and through the actions of individuals who work with genetic diversity on a daily basis – for example, farmers who are critical to maintaining *in situ*, on-farm biodiversity and indigenous and local communities whose traditional livelihoods are closely intertwined with their environments.

Such actions will be critical in order to ensure food and nutrition security, biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation in agriculture. The momentous challenge we face in adapting

to climate change and ensuring we can continue to produce the food we need to feed ourselves will require us to make the best use of the tools we have to respond to these changes and incorporating plant genetic resources, data and technology into our responses will undoubtedly assist us in meeting these global environmental challenges.

To this end, the International Treaty calls for its Parties to develop and strengthen a global information system on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. I am very pleased that the Governing Body of the Treaty, at its fifth meeting, launched an expert consultation on the Global Information System, which is to draw upon the experience of the CBD Secretariat, among others. We look forward to taking part in this process over the coming months and to exchanging information that can build a solid and coherent information exchange infrastructure.

As provided in the International Treaty, cooperation with the clearing-house mechanism of the CBD is to be sought in the development of the Global Information system. The clearing-house mechanism is currently being re-developed and an important component of this work is the establishment of the ABS Clearing-House as mandated by the Nagoya Protocol.

The ABS Clearing-House has an essential role to play in operationalizing the Nagoya Protocol and creating the clarity, transparency and legal certainty that all parties are seeking. The ABS Clearing-House is currently in its pilot phase and the Secretariat has focused its recent efforts in providing hands-on training in the use of the Clearing-House during a series of regional workshops on the Nagoya Protocol. This training has provided an opportunity to improve understanding of the Clearing-House and enable active participation by building capacity to both submit information and make use of the tools available through the Clearing-House. It has also allowed us to gather valuable feedback from Parties in order to improve the functionality of the system. A fully functional ABS Clearing-House is a vital component in the achievement of Aichi Biodiversity Target 16 which provides that by 2015, the Nagoya Protocol is in force and operational, consistent with national legislation. Technical tools such as the Global Information System and the ABS Clearing-House facilitate the exchange of information pertinent to the success of both the International Treaty and the Nagoya Protocol. The compatibility and interoperability of these tools will be a key component of their success.

I am encouraged by the International Treaty's commitment to cooperation and mutual supportiveness to better serve the international community. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity is honoured to take part in the work of the International Treaty and the fruitful relationship between our Secretariats remains of great importance to the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Parties. I am optimistic that through our collective efforts the Aichi Biodiversity Targets will be realized and sustainable development achieved.

Thank you.