



Statement by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity

on the occasion of

**World Ocean Council Business Forum on Ocean Policy and Planning
(29 to 30 September 2014, New York, USA)**

Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, I am pleased to have this opportunity to join you here today and discuss the importance of business engagement with respect to oceans in achieving the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Marine and coastal biodiversity – ecosystems, species and genetic material – provide enormous benefits for human well-being. Productive marine ecosystems provide critical ecosystem services that underpin a healthy environment, present a wealth of opportunities for sustainable economic growth and support social well-being. It is clear that our modern way of life would simply not be possible without the richness of life on Earth. It is from these ecosystems that we draw the means for industrial production and growth, making a strong business case for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Marine ecosystems are, however, facing increasing threats that undermine their ability to provide critical services and contribute to sustainable development. The impacts of overfishing, pollution, habitat destruction and emerging impacts of climate change, among other threats, are causing unprecedented biodiversity loss in the oceans. This not only impacts the global environment, but also undermines economic growth and social well-being.

Clearly, conserving and sustainably utilizing marine and coastal biodiversity is simply good business. This is something that is well-known to those who are gathered here today. Around this room, there are examples of the private sector taking positive steps towards stewardship of our planet's valuable ocean resources. But more needs to be done to reverse the trends of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation.

In 2010, the Conference of the Parties to the CBD adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2010-2020 and twenty Aichi Biodiversity Targets, which lay out an ambitious and feasible agenda to reverse the trends of biodiversity loss. Through the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, global leaders have stressed the importance of conserving and sustainably utilizing the oceans, and have committed to protect and restore the health, productivity and resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems.

There are a number of Aichi Biodiversity Targets that are especially relevant to marine and coastal biodiversity. Through Aichi Targets 6, 10 and 11, respectively, Parties have committed to achieve



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sustainable fisheries by 2020, reduce the pressures on coral reefs and associated ecosystems by 2015, and protect 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020. Also relevant are Aichi Targets 3 to reform economic incentives, 9 to prevent and combat the spread of alien invasive species and 12 to halt human-induced species extinctions. As well, Aichi Target 4 calls for governments, business and stakeholders at all levels to implement plans for sustainable production and consumption by 2020.

The CBD Secretariat works to facilitate the achievement of these goals by supporting science-based decision-making and implementation of practical management tools to improve conservation and sustainable use. We have conducted and published scientific assessments to improve the understanding of major threats, such as ocean acidification, underwater noise, coral bleaching and marine debris, and to identify practical means to mitigate the impacts of these threats.

In particular, the recent work of the CBD on marine spatial planning represents another opportunity to make progress towards the Aichi Targets. Marine spatial planning has emerged as a valuable tool to minimize impacts on marine biodiversity, avoid conflicts among various stakeholders and ensure that ocean resources are used in a sustainable way. The recent CBD expert workshop on marine spatial planning emphasized MSP as a useful tool for applying the ecosystem approach to ocean and coastal management and discussed practical guidance in implementing MSP in different contexts.

The CBD's work on ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) is also an important example of cross-sectoral scientific collaboration in support of informed and science-based management. Through a series of nine regional workshops, the CBD's EBSA process has compiled scientific information to describe more than 200 areas meeting the EBSA criteria around the world. This process has facilitated the sharing of scientific information, networking of experts across disciplines, and enhanced collaboration for marine conservation and sustainable use. As clearly highlighted by the Conference of Parties to the Convention in its decisions X/29 and XI/17, the description of areas as meeting the scientific criteria for EBSAs through CBD's regional workshops does not prejudice any decision on the use or management of such areas. The identification of ecologically or biologically significant areas and the selection of conservation and management measures is a matter for States and competent intergovernmental organizations, in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Engagement of the business sector is essential in achieving the goals of the Convention and meeting the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. To this end, the CBD Secretariat has been pursuing a comprehensive strategy designed to more deeply engage the business community in order to help them mainstream biodiversity issues, as mandated by both COP 10 and 11. At the upcoming COP 12 meeting in Korea (starting next week), the CBD Secretariat will be hosting a three day business forum entitled "Mainstreaming Biodiversity: Innovative Opportunities for Business". This will include sessions on biotrade, tourism, commodity impacts, reporting, capacity building and the Global Partnership for Business and Biodiversity. We are very pleased to note that the World Ocean Council will be taking part in this event, and that it has been engaged with our programme and the Partnership since its inception.

The CBD welcomes bold commitments from the business community for ocean stewardship and seeks to engage in further collaboration to achieve our common goals of a healthy and productive marine environment. Sustainable oceans can be achieved only through the building of 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 should ensure a sustainable future for the oceans of the world.

Thank you for your attention.