



OPENING REMARKS BY

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**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

to the

**HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE
TWELFTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
TO THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

**Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea
15 October 2014**

Your Excellency, Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea

Governor of Gangwon Province

Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished delegates and colleagues from the UN System, International organizations, the GEF and civil society,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking the Government of the Republic of Korea for all of their work in preparing this high-level segment during the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and for providing the superb facilities for the meetings in PyeongChang. The theme, Biodiversity for Sustainable Development, could not be more relevant or timely, and the programme is truly innovative and exciting, with an impressive list of speakers.

It is a great pleasure and privilege to have this opportunity to share my thoughts about where we are in our efforts to achieve the objectives of the Convention, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the road ahead.

The key message I want to convey is very simple: the fate of humanity is tightly linked with biodiversity – the variety of life on earth. Biodiversity is essential for sustainable development and human well-being. All of our speakers have reminded us of this.

We will not be able to achieve sustainable development if we do not implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. Likewise, we will not achieve internationally agreed goals of protecting and restoring biodiversity and using it sustainably and equitably if we fail to mainstream biodiversity into development policies.

The twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CBD and this high-level segment come at an important time, just one year before the halfway mark of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity. The fourth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*, the major points of which I will be presenting to you in the next session, provides us with an assessment of the progress towards implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and achieving its Aichi Biodiversity Targets. It is at this critical time that we can identify additional steps to ensure that we meet our collective goals. This Conference of the Parties will be adopting a set of decisions to that effect which will be labelled the “Pyeongchang Roadmap”.

This high-level segment represents one of the few opportunities for us to have interactive a high-level panel discussions on thematic issues of great interest to CBD Parties. These dialogues will allow for more informal and engaged discussions. Over the next two days, we will have a tremendous opportunity to draw from an exchange of experiences and ideas for how we can collectively succeed with the task at hand – to ensure that we build the momentum for mainstreaming biodiversity beyond the core biodiversity community, to ensure the central role of biodiversity in the post-2015 development agenda, and to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and achieve by the end of the decade all the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

The Strategic Plan broke new ground by recognizing the need to mainstream biodiversity into other sectors and processes, and nowhere is that more vital than in the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals.

Simply put, biodiversity is a critical foundation of the Earth's life support system on which the welfare of current and future generations depends. Biodiversity:

- (a) Provides basic goods, such as food, fibre, fuel and medicine;
- (b) Underpins ecosystem functions and the provision of benefits to people, such as water purification and supply, pollination, regulation of pests and diseases, soil nutrient cycling and fertility;
- (c) Provides ecosystem resilience and contributes to the ability to respond to unpredictable global changes and natural disasters;
- (d) Includes genetic diversity, which is essential for species and ecosystems to adapt in order to meet current and future challenges; and, finally,
- (e) Biodiversity is valued for cultural, spiritual and religious reasons, and provides opportunities for research and education.

The benefits provided by biodiversity are important to all people. If we neglect biodiversity and permit its continued decline, we will undermine our goals of poverty eradication, food security, access to water, human health and adaptation to climate change – all vital for the well-being of us all, but especially for indigenous peoples, the poor and vulnerable, and women and children.

Thanks to the growing understanding of this link between biodiversity and sustainable development, biodiversity features prominently in the outcome of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. However, we mustn't lose this momentum, as our work is far from over.

I would like to highlight the relevance of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing to promote a more equitable world.

We have a great opportunity before us at the United Nations General Assembly to mainstream biodiversity at the global level. I am confident that the results of this meeting will be an important step in this process and look forward to the dialogues and conclusions of your discussions.

We should all be inspired by the accomplishments of the Republic of Korea in recent decades which attained remarkable economic growth and enhancement of well-being of its population while restoring and conserving its forests.

Thank you for your attention.

