



**Statement by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological
Diversity**

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Distinguished delegates, colleagues and friends,

Thank you very much for the kind invitation to attend and address the Fifteenth Regular Session of the Commission.

In order to be brief I will focus on updating you on relevant activities under our Joint Work Plan 2011-2020 with the Secretariat of the Commission that have occurred since the last regular session and in particular highlighting some important outcomes from the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD concluded in October 2014 in the Republic of Korea.

Regarding the status of, and trends in, genetic resources for food and agriculture:

COP-12 included a mid-term review of progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets based largely on the Fourth Edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO4). The various reviews under the *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture* were particularly important sources of information, notably regarding assessing progress towards Aichi Biodiversity Target 13. Some progress towards this target is evident but efforts fall short of that required to achieve it. Lack of progress regarding wild relatives of domesticated species is particularly notable. At this point I would like to express my appreciation for the offer of the FAO to take a lead role as biodiversity champion for Aichi Biodiversity Target 13. This will be instrumental in promoting action towards the achievement of this target.

An assessment was also made on progress in implementation of the *Global Strategy for Plant Conservation*. Progress is being made towards all its targets, but generally not at a sufficient rate to achieve the targets in full by 2020. Enhanced efforts are required to implement the Strategy through promoting and facilitating communication, coordination and partnerships.

The FAO Global Plans of Action for plant and animal genetic resources continue to provide frameworks for action in these regards. The finalisation of *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture* will be a critical input to further monitoring of progress.

Based on the outcomes of GBO4, CBD COP-12 also identified that progress towards sustainable food and agriculture is crucial in determining whether the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 will succeed, and recognized the reviewed Strategic Framework 2010-2019 of the FAO, addressing agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, with its mutually reinforcing objectives to eradicate hunger, food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty while sustainably managing and utilizing natural resources, as an important contribution to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011 - 2020 and the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Consequently, the CBD Secretariat and the FAO will continue to further strengthen their cooperation on relevant matters.

Regarding access and benefit sharing:

COP-12 marked a milestone in the history of the Convention with the entry into force of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit sharing on the 12th October 2014. The first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol was held concurrently with CBD COP-12. Decisions adopted by the Parties to the Protocol include: a process on Article 10 of the Protocol (on the global multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism), which would take into account experiences from other multilateral mechanisms and relevant work of other processes; a Strategic Framework for Capacity-Building; an awareness-raising

strategy and procedures and mechanisms to promote compliance with the provisions of the Protocol and address cases of non-compliance.

Our Joint Work Plan with the Secretariat of the Commission provides for collaboration to further promote the Nagoya Protocol. The CBD Secretariat has continued to closely follow developments under the Commission and participated as an observer in a number of technical meetings and the two Secretariats also took part in a number of regional capacity-building workshops on the Nagoya Protocol in 2013 and 2014.

Under the memorandum of understanding between the Secretariats of the CBD and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, a Joint Initiative of cooperation is supporting further ratifications of the Nagoya Protocol and its harmonious implementation with the Treaty and its Multilateral System for Access and Benefit-sharing. This includes expanded joint capacity-building initiatives, continuation of preparation of joint materials on ABS and continued cooperation on information management. We have together undertaken a number of activities including high-level briefings, capacity-building workshops and side events. The CBD Secretariat has also followed developments under the Treaty such as the ongoing process of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group to Enhance the Functioning of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing and is providing information on the ABS Clearing-House as part of the Consultation on the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture being undertaken in the context of the Treaty. The CBD Secretariat is also currently hosting a staff member of the Treaty Secretariat.

Regarding Biotechnology:

An expert group established by the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety has developed “Guidance on Risk Assessment of Living Modified Organisms” consisting of a roadmap for risk assessment with an emphasis on agricultural crops, and specific guidelines applicable to certain types of living modified organisms or traits such as agricultural crops resistant to abiotic stress, crops with multiple modified traits, and cultivated trees. The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety at its seventh meeting, held immediately prior to CBD COP-12, invited its Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to use this Guidance.

The Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety also recommended to the Conference of the Parties to the CBD a coordinated approach on the issue of synthetic biology taking into account that the provisions of the Cartagena Protocol may also apply to living organisms resulting from synthetic biology.

CBD COP-12 considered synthetic biology as a potential new and emerging issue based on two useful background documents: one on the potential positive and negative impacts of components, organisms and products resulting from synthetic biology techniques on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; and a second on possible gaps and overlaps with the applicable provisions of the Convention, its Protocols and other relevant agreements. COP-12 reaffirmed its decision at COP-11 urging a precautionary approach to addressing threats posed by synthetic biology and urged Parties and other Governments to establish, or have in place, effective risk assessment and management procedures and/or regulatory systems to regulate environmental release of any organisms, components or products resulting from synthetic biology.

The CBD Secretariat is currently convening a moderated open-ended online forum on synthetic biology to support the work of an Ad-Hoc Technical Expert Group later this year. Parties, other Governments, relevant organisations and stakeholders are invited to submit relevant information to the Secretariat to support this work.

Regarding Biodiversity, Nutrition and Human Health

The Secretariat of the CBD and the World Health Organization, and other partners have prepared a report on biodiversity and human health titled *Connecting Global Priorities: Biodiversity and Human Health, A State of Knowledge Review*. The report highlights the importance of genetic resources for food and agriculture for human health, notably as they contribute to food security and nutrition. The preliminary conclusions of the report helped inform discussions of the topic at CBD COP-12 and the adoption of a decision that recognizes the relevance of the cross cutting initiative on biodiversity for food and nutrition for the linkages among biodiversity, food, nutrition and health and emphasised the relevance of the interlinkages between biodiversity and human health for the post-2015 United Nations development agenda and the sustainable development goals. The Secretariat of the CBD is preparing a report on the implications of the findings for the work under the Convention, for consideration by a meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technical Advice as well as carrying out further work to develop indicators on biodiversity and human health, undertaking capacity building, reporting on matters to the 68th World Health Assembly and further strengthening collaboration with the FAO on this topic.

Regarding the ninth regular meeting of the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-Related Conventions, 16 August 2014 in Switzerland

The Liaison Group noted the long-standing collaboration between the Secretariat of the CBD and that of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), including a joint secretariat meeting in 2013 where the IPPC Secretariat expressed an interest in joining the Biodiversity Liaison Group. The IPPC Secretariat attended this meeting, as an observer.

The GEF Secretariat expressed its appreciation for the support and inputs received from the Biodiversity Liaison Group members for the sixth replenishment and the development of the GEF Biodiversity Strategy which emphasizes synergies in the implementation of biodiversity-related conventions under the direction of the Strategic Plan on Biodiversity 2011 - 2020.

Members agreed that the IPBES Secretariat should be invited to next meeting of the Group and to have a dedicated agenda item on IPBES cooperation, focusing especially on scientific and technological cooperation and the agreed thematic assessment on sustainable use.

It was agreed that members should continue to coordinate and share information both during and after the adoption of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, and that the Secretariat of the CBD would solicit inputs from members for the development of indicators.

The meeting also identified ways forward regarding information sharing and joint reporting.

Distinguished delegates, colleagues and friends, since the Rio+20 conference we have seen increasing recognition in global policy discussions of the importance of biodiversity to human development. I am particularly encouraged by the increasing awareness of the centrality of sustainable agriculture and food systems to multiple agendas including poverty reduction, environment, disaster risk reduction and human health, and of the role of biodiversity in helping us find solutions. But a significant shortfall in implementation still exists. I look forward to continued work to support the Commission in view of its important role in addressing some of these critical gaps.

Thank you, Chair.