



STATEMENT

OF

MR. BRAULIO F. DE SOUZA DIAS

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

On the occasion of

**THE MINISTERIAL SEGMENT OF THE AFRICAN MINISTERIAL
CONFERENCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT (AMCEN) AT ITS FIFTEENTH
SESSION**

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**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

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Distinguished President of AMCEN
Honorable Ministers and Heads of Delegation
Executive Director of UNEP
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to commend the prominent attention being given at this meeting to the contribution of Africa's natural capital, including biodiversity and ecosystems, to sustainable development and poverty eradication. In particular, I am pleased to note that this meeting will be considering the draft African Union strategic guidelines for the coordinated implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization.

The Nagoya Protocol holds great promise to contribute not only to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, but also, more broadly, to environmental sustainability, improved livelihoods, poverty eradication and sustainable development in Africa. By providing greater legal certainty and a transparent framework to promote opportunities for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, the Protocol creates incentives to further enhance the contribution of biodiversity to sustainable development and human well-being.

For this reason, I wish to congratulate the African Union for its vision and leadership in spearheading the ratification and implementation of the Nagoya Protocol. Already, of the fifty-nine states that have, to date, ratified or acceded to the Nagoya Protocol, twenty-seven are African countries.

Your Excellencies, in October 2014, the first meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol established a firm foundation for the operationalization of the Protocol. This included the adoption of cooperative procedures and institutional mechanisms to promote compliance; a strategic framework for capacity-building and capacity development; an awareness-raising strategy for the Protocol; guidance on resource mobilization for the implementation of the Protocol; and modalities for the operation of the ABS Clearing-House.

I would like to take this opportunity to urge those countries that have not yet done so, to ratify or accede to the Nagoya Protocol as soon as possible. I further wish to call upon all Parties that have not yet done so, to designate a national focal point, one or more competent national authorities, and a publishing authority for the ABS Clearing-House, in order to provide effective institutional structures and governance at the national level. I also invite all Parties to make available to the ABS Clearing-House, information required under the Protocol, including existing legislative, administrative and policy measures on access and benefit-sharing.

Your Excellencies, the governing meetings of the Convention and its Protocols held in October 2014 in the Republic of Korea, also saw significant advances under the Convention itself and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Among the outcomes of the seventh meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol is the guidance provided on risk assessment of living modified organisms. While the guidance will

be further improved with a view to adoption by the eighth meeting of the Parties in 2016, already it provides an important practical tool for capacity-building activities in risk assessment. As a supportive measure, the Republic of Korea established a capacity building programme to support the implementation of the Protocol, in particular facilitating the identification and detection of LMOs. I would like to take this opportunity to urge African countries to ratify the Nagoya - Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

At its twelfth meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention agreed on the findings of the fourth Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO4) that serves as a mid-term assessment of progress in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The COP recognized that there has been encouraging progress towards meeting some elements of most Aichi Biodiversity Targets but, in most cases, this progress will not be sufficient to achieve the targets unless further urgent and effective action is taken to reduce the pressures on biodiversity and to prevent its continued decline.

Towards this end, a number of key decisions of the COP were included under the “Pyeongchang Roadmap for the enhanced implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets”. These include, among others, measures to strengthen technical and scientific cooperation and capacity building; measures to follow up on the recommendations of GBO4; and agreement on the financial resources needed to support effective implementation of the Strategic Plan and the achievement of the Aichi Targets.

In addition COP 12 provided significant decisions, among others, on Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas; prevention of invasive alien species from the trade of pets, live baits and live food; synthetic biology; and biodiversity and poverty eradication and sustainable development. In addition, Ministers and other heads of delegation at the high-level segment adopted the Gangwon Declaration on Biodiversity for Sustainable Development.

Key to strengthened efforts to address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss will be mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society and major sectors of the economy. Meeting the Aichi Biodiversity Targets would contribute significantly to broader national and global priorities, including eradicating hunger and poverty, improving human health, ensuring a sustainable supply of energy, food and clean water, contributing to climate-change mitigation and adaptation, combating desertification and land degradation, and reducing vulnerability to disasters. Biodiversity should not be perceived as a problem to be solved but rather as an opportunity to help achieve these broader social and economic goals.

Excellencies, it is time for you to change the way you deal with biodiversity. Instead of just asking for money to conserve biodiversity, you should promote the sustainable use, restoration and conservation of biodiversity as a strategy to contribute to solve important problems like food insecurity, water insecurity, health insecurity, poverty, disaster vulnerability, etc. In doing so, you should propose investments in biodiversity solutions in a similar way your fellow ministers do in other sectors, presenting feasibility studies showing the expected economic and social benefits to the country and its society, and indicating how much the returns in benefits will outweigh the investments proposed and how many jobs could be created. Yes, I

am talking about investments and not costs. This is the true meaning of treating biodiversity as natural capital.

It is essential, therefore, that the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the sustainable management of ecosystems be integrated among the practical implementation measures to achieve the sustainable development goals that will be adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015. It will be equally essential that sustainable management of biodiversity is included among the measures to implement the new framework for disaster risk reduction to be adopted in Sendai, Japan, later this month, as well as the Paris agreement on climate change to be adopted under the Framework Convention in December. Towards this end, it will be essential that we mainstream biodiversity through integrated approaches into the national development agendas.

Yesterday we commemorated the World Wildlife Day as we struggle to control the growing illegal wildlife trade, which is an import issue in the agenda of this meeting.

Adopting regional approaches and mechanisms also provides potential to strengthen implementation, as indeed exemplified by the AU strategic guidelines for the coordinated implementation of the Nagoya Protocol in Africa. To contribute towards this, I have been asked by the COP to explore options, including potential of partnerships and synergies with other organizations, for holding regional preparatory meetings prior to the concurrent meetings of the Conference of the Parties and the meetings of the Parties to the Protocols.

Accordingly, I would like to propose for your consideration that at its sixteenth session, the AMCEN include a prominent item on its agenda dedicated to preparation for the meetings of the COP 13 and the Protocols. This could include preparation towards the outcomes envisaged for the high-level segment.

Another element of strengthening regionally coordinated implementation lies in strengthening the involvement of regional and international organizations, such as UNEP, to support the efforts of Parties to implement their commitments under the Convention and its Protocols.

Your Excellencies, I would like to conclude by reflecting that since the Convention entered into force in December 1993, only once has the Conference of the Parties convened in Africa, fifteen years ago in Kenya.

Distinguished President, the interest expressed to the last Conference of the Parties by the Government of Egypt in hosting the fourteenth meeting of the COP in 2018 is therefore timely and fitting. I would like to express my own hope that in the very near future the COP will indeed convene again in Africa, as befits the strong contribution of Africa to the CBD and its Protocols.

Thank you for your kind attention.
