



STATEMENT

OF

MR. BRAULIO F. DE SOUZA DIAS

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

On the occasion of

**CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY**

**ORGANIZED BY THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION OF CHINA**

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**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

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Excellencies, Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to address you here in Beijing, one of the Four Great Ancient Capitals of China, on the International Day for Biological Diversity. I want to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to the Government of China, in particular the Ministry of Environmental Protection, for organizing this event.

The International Day for Biological Diversity provides us all with an opportunity to recognize the central role of biodiversity and healthy ecosystems to all life on Earth. And this year's theme, "Biodiversity for Sustainable Development", is particularly appropriate as it reflects the importance of efforts being made at all levels to establish a set of [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) as part of the United Nations [Post-2015 Development Agenda](#) for the period of 2015-2030.

We cannot underestimate the importance of biodiversity. Simply put, biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides are essential for sustainable development and human well-being. Biodiversity serves as a critical foundation of the Earth's life support system on which the welfare of current and future generations depend.

Apart from providing such basic goods as food, fibre, fuel and medicine, biodiversity 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. Biodiversity also provides ecosystem resilience and contributes to the ability to respond to unpredictable global changes and natural disasters; it includes genetic diversity essential for the adaptation of species and ecosystems to meet current and future challenges; it is valued for cultural, spiritual, and religious reasons; and, it provides opportunities for education, research and technology.

Too often, however, we tend to focus on the message that ultimately the loss and degradation of biodiversity will impact negatively on all people. And while that is true, it is important to match this with the positive message that the natural infrastructure provided by biodiversity is a ready-made cost-effective solution to the challenges we face in the 21st century.

For example, protecting ecosystems and ensuring access to ecosystem services by poor and vulnerable groups are an essential part of poverty eradication. Reducing deforestation and forest degradation and enhancing carbon stocks in forests, drylands, rangelands and croplands, is not only a cost effective way to mitigate climate change but it also generates other social and economic benefits. Even the built environments of our cities are linked to and affected by biodiversity. For example, green spaces in our cities help reduce violence, enhance human health and well-being, and strengthen communities. Ecosystem-based solutions to common urban challenges can both protect biodiversity and be cost-effective.

In fact, the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity can provide solutions to a host of societal challenges. In this regard, I am very pleased to see that the Government of

China has recently undertaken a range of significant environmental initiatives. These include the adoption of a new environmental protection law which provides provisions concerning ecological and biodiversity conservation and requires setting "red lines" for ecological and biodiversity conditions; adopting a land zoning plan where some land zones have been identified for prohibiting development activities and strictly for ecological and biodiversity conservation; completed, for the first time, a nationwide biodiversity assessment, which has identified key areas for biodiversity and protection; finalized a Red List of threatened species; and, has been implementing a number of major projects for ecological and biodiversity conservation, such as conservation projects in areas of the sources of the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers.

As we move forward, incorporating biodiversity into the new Sustainable Development Goals provides us with an important opportunity to bring biodiversity into the mainstream of decision-making. It also highlights the need to raise public awareness of the value of biodiversity as a solution to the challenges of sustainable development. Through increased awareness, people will start paying more attention to biodiversity and thus be more likely to take steps to halt its decline.

That being said, we are already seeing an increase in biodiversity awareness in both the developed and the developing world. Important progress has been achieved in incorporating biodiversity values into planning processes and strategies to reduce poverty, and integrating natural capital into national accounts. And people are indeed beginning to recognize that their health, their wealth and well-being is tightly linked with biodiversity.

The onus now is on us to provide meaningful and concrete examples that resonate with people. For example, it is important that we convey the fact that biodiversity is a vital asset in global and local economies and directly supports major economic activity and jobs in such diverse sectors as agriculture, fisheries, forestry, pharmaceuticals, pulp and paper, cosmetics, horticulture, tourism, construction and biotechnology.

The world's fisheries, for example, employ more than 180 million people, with the global marine fish catch worth US\$70 billion to US\$80 billion per year. Over three billion people depend on marine and coastal biological resources for their livelihoods. Food production depends largely on biodiversity and the services provided by ecosystems. Biodiversity is also the basis for soil fertility, pollination, pest control and all aspects important for producing food for a growing population. Bees and other insects that pollinate crops are estimated to be worth more than US\$200 billion per year to the global food economy, so the numbers speak for themselves.

The good news going forward is that there is a widely-agreed framework in place for addressing biodiversity linked with sustainable development – the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, as agreed by 192 governments in 2010 and further reaffirmed in the Rio + 20 outcome document. As confirmed by recent discussions in the UN General Assembly, meeting the Aichi Targets will contribute significantly to broader national and global priorities addressed by the post-2015 development agenda, 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.

In addition, the period 2011-2020 has been declared by the United Nations General Assembly as the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity. The Decade is a vehicle to support and promote implementation of the objectives of the Strategic Plan and the Aichi Targets, and seeks to promote the involvement of a variety of national and intergovernmental actors and other stakeholders in the goal of mainstreaming all relevant issues related to biodiversity into broader development planning and economic activities.

Today, as we celebrate the 2015 International Day for Biological Diversity, it is important that we do not perceive of biodiversity as a problem to be solved, but rather as an opportunity to help achieve these broader social and economic goals. We owe it to future generations to ensure that biodiversity will provide them with the same benefits that we enjoyed. That is truly the future we want, a future of life in harmony with nature.

Thank you very much for your attention.