



STATEMENT

OF

MR. BRAULIO F. DE SOUZA DIAS

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

On the occasion of

**THE CELEBRATION OF THE 30th ANNIVERSARY OF THE
REINTRODUCTION OF PERE DAVID'S DEER**

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BEIJING, CHINA



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

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Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to address you here in Beijing on the International Day for Biological Diversity. I want to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to the China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation for organizing this event.

Each year, the International Day for Biological Diversity provides us with a wonderful opportunity to recognize the central role of biodiversity and healthy ecosystems to all life on Earth. This year's theme, "Biodiversity for Sustainable Development", 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 2015-2030 and the relevance of biodiversity for the achievement of sustainable development.

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

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. 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. Thus the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity can provide solutions to a range of societal challenges – in fact, the natural infrastructure provided by biodiversity is a ready-made cost-effective solution to many of the issues we face in the 21st century.

In this regard, I am very pleased to see that the Government of China has recently undertaken several 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.

This year also marks the 30th anniversary of a wonderful endeavour, the reintroduction into China of Pere David's deer, a classic example of how to rescue a highly threatened species. Also known as the milu, it was once found in China along the central and lower Yangtze River basin. But years of overhunting and the loss of its wetland habitat due to reclamation led to the extinction of the species in the wild in the early 20th century. In 1985, a small population of Père David's deer, bred at the Woburn Abbey wildlife park in the United Kingdom, were re-introduced to the Central Yangtze by the Government of China. After decades of *ex situ* conservation the species has bred successfully in captivity and there are now fenced populations in Beijing, Dafeng, Tianezhou and Yuanyang. Once considered a symbol of good fortune, it is now all of our good fortune to see this animal doing well and back in its native land. This is a great example that conservation efforts can be effective to halt the loss of biodiversity.

Going forward, the Sustainable Development Goals and the broader post-2015 development agenda, under negotiation now, provide an opportunity for the mainstreaming of biodiversity across government, economies and societies. Biodiversity needs to be integrated into overarching goals addressing broad concepts such as poverty eradication, an inclusive “green economy”, human well-being and sustainable development. By taking integrated approaches the importance of maintaining biodiversity will be fully acknowledged whenever development is addressed.

The good news 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.

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 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 for your attention.