STATEMENT

OF

MR. BRAULIO F. DE SOUZA DIAS

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

On the occasion of

The 6th International Barcode of Life Conference

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Guelph, Canada

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Distinguished participants,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen:

It is a great pleasure and honor to address you here at the opening of the 6th International Barcode of Life Conference in Guelph, "the Royal City" of Canada. Firstly, let me take this opportunity to thank the Biodiversity Institute of Ontario and the University of Guelph for hosting and organizing this remarkable event. As one of Canada's leading universities in the life sciences and home to the center of expertise for DNA barcoding in Canada, I think of no better place to house the exchange of scientific knowledge of the research community when it comes to this particular topic. I would also like to thank the International Barcode of Life Project (iBOL), the Consortium for Barcode of Life (CBOL), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Japan Biodiversity Fund for their exceptional support; and of course to the many other sponsors, who with their valuable contributions, made this conference possible.

As you know, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 with its twenty Aichi Biodiversity Targets was adopted at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Nagoya, Japan in 2010. In 2014, the fourth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* (GBO-4) was published with technical contributions of scientists from around the world on biodiversity, and offers a mid-term assessment of progress towards the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The GBO4 indicates that although there has been significant progress towards meeting some components of the majority of the Aichi Targets, this progress will not be sufficient to achieve the targets set for 2020 and therefore additional action is required. This informed us that even when countries are willing to act, we find that limited capacities are among the common challenges for countries to develop and implement national strategies, plans and actions, particularly when it comes to the streaming of science into decision-making. With this in mind, the Conference of Parties requested the Executive Secretary to engage in capacity building on several cross-cutting issues, including for the management of invasive alien species in support of the Global Taxonomy Initiative, as well as for the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation.

In this context, the SCBD partnered with the International Barcode of Life Project (iBOL) to organize a training course on the application of DNA barcoding in detection and monitoring of priority invasive alien species, pests and zoonotic disease vectors for interested Parties. The training consisted on two modules: an 8-week online distance education course, in which 21 countries participated; followed by a 5-week hands-on training, here in the University of Guelph, for the ten top-scoring participants of the first module, and who are here today present at this conference. In this growing global economy, it is our hope that the knowledge they have gained here will be taken back to their home countries and used to further train others, while contributing to the implementation of their respective national biodiversity strategies and facilitating safe international trade development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations Summit to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda will take place this September in New York, and it will include the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs include 17 universal goals and 169 targets that integrate economic, social and environmental aspects. It remains clear that in order to achieve sustainable development in all of its dimensions, there must be a sustainable provision of biological resources paired with the facilitation of solid scientific research. This is where many of you will have important roles. Education and research opens the door for both developing and developed countries to work together; for example: taxonomy experts can support Government agencies discover and manage species and genetic resources in protected areas, including marine protected areas, and in production areas to tackle invasive species such as agricultural pests and diseases. Rapid identification of species can assist border officers apply appropriate quarantine measures to intercept unwanted species that could enter and spread.

Humans have the good fortune to benefit from biodiversity, and as such, we bear the enormous responsibility to ensure that this utilization does not exceed nature's capacity to regenerate itself. The deep interconnectedness among people, other living organisms and ecosystems has played a critical role in maintaining the health and wellbeing of many. Nevertheless, global biodiversity is declining at an unprecedented rate as a result of human activities, and action must be taken now to combat this trend. We all know that one of the great challenges that global conservation efforts face is that taxonomic knowledge is far from complete. In the past 250 years of research, taxonomists have named about 1.8 million species of animals, plants and micro-organisms, yet the total number of species on Earth remains unknown. Taxonomy provides basic understanding about the components of biodiversity which is necessary for effective decision-making about conservation and sustainable use. Furthermore, taxonomic information is essential for assessing the risks of wildlife trade. The detection and control of invasive alien species and the spotting of specimens of endangered species in international trade have been supported by taxonomic institutions and such contribution have been underpinned in many countries to facilitate safe international trade for development. For these, and many of other reasons, DNA barcoding plays an important role when it comes to protecting our biodiversity as it permits both the identification of known species and the discovery of new ones.

As scientific data and information are essential for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, I am grateful that every one of you in this room is fueled with passion to collaborate with each other. It enhances the capacity for species identification in a fast and cost effective way. There is a clear need to further develop next generation DNA barcoding and enrich the data set in the Barcode of Life Database to expand the coverage of identified species. I encourage all of you here to continue making progress in this aspect, for advances to be made toward achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and SDGs will require strategic partnerships between the countries, our regional and global partners, and of course, the scientific community. We will work together in this spirit of collaboration for the benefit of the conservation of our nature.

With this, I wish you a successful conference with fruitful discussions.
Thank you.