



**OPENING REMARKS BY**

**BRAULIO FERREIRA DE SOUZA DIAS**

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

**to the**

**HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE**

**2016 UNITED NATIONS BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE**

*Thirteenth meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity  
Eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the  
Parties to the Cartagena Protocol  
Second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the  
Parties to the Nagoya Protocol*

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**Convention on  
Biological Diversity**

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- His Excellency Mr. Rafael Pacchiano Alamán, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico and COP 13 President,
- His Excellency Mr. José Calzada, Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development and Fisheries of Mexico
- His Excellency Mr. Enrique de la Madrid, Minister of Tourism of Mexico
- His Excellency Mr. Miguel Ruíz Cabañas, Vice-minister of Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico
- Mr. Chun Kyoo Park, Director-General of the Nature Conservation Bureau, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea, representing the COP 12 Presidency
- Ms. Helen Clark, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme
- Mr. Erik Solheim, Executive Director, UN Environment
- Ms. Naoko Ishii, Chief Executive Officer, Global Environment Facility
- Mr. José Sarukhan, National Coordinator of the National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity in Mexico
- Mr. Jorge Rescala, General Director of the National Forestry Commission of Mexico

Distinguished members of the panel and guest speakers,

Excellencies and heads of delegations,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Like those who have spoken before me, I am pleased to welcome you all to the high-level segment of this United Nations Biodiversity Conference. This is my last meeting of the Conference of the Parties as the Executive Secretary of our Convention on Biological Diversity and it is therefore particularly rewarding to see the work of the past several years come to fruition at this meeting.

I sincerely thank Secretary Pacchiano and his team for the tremendous efforts they have undertaken in the preparations for this United Nations Biodiversity Conference, with the theme “Mainstreaming biodiversity for well-being”. I also thank Ministers Calzada and de la Madrid Cordero for their engagement in this high-level segment. I also pay tribute to the Province of Quintana Roo and the city of Cancun for the warm hospitality we have experienced.

Since the decision on the host for this Conference was taken two years ago, Mexico has demonstrated exceptional leadership on biodiversity mainstreaming — the main theme that serves as the leitmotiv for our deliberations and the decisions expected to come from this Conference. Not only has Mexico been very active and vocal in advancing the integration of biodiversity in a range of international and intergovernmental processes; its updated NBSAP – our acronym for a national biodiversity strategy and action plan – is evidence of the thoughtful and inclusive process that seeks to bring to bear biodiversity considerations in all areas of life and in all parts of the country.

As you are all aware, the Yucatan Peninsula, where we are gathered, was once home to the Mayan civilization. Despite the many cultural developments that included complex societies,

agriculture, cities, monumental architecture, writing, and calendrical systems, this civilization is thought to have collapsed centuries ago due to the overexploitation of natural resources and degradation of its forests.

Today, we are faced with similar challenges on a global scale. We know that we live beyond our means and that we have to take drastic and urgent action to halt biodiversity loss, avoid land and soil degradation, and prevent climate change — so as not to follow the destiny of many past civilizations that collapsed. Under various forums, we have given ourselves plans and strategies to achieve this. Last year, we agreed on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as an integrated and holistic framework meant to weave together the individual threads.

Yet, we have a tendency to look at issues in an isolated way, to seek solutions without studying the implications in other fields, to undertake quick fixes that disregard the consequences. We tend to set ourselves ambitious targets and then fail to achieve them. We are often ineffective in our actions because actions taken in different sectors are not aligned. We need to stop repeating the same mistakes over and over again. We need to advance the coherence of our policies and actions in all areas. We need to be thoughtful and inclusive to successfully mainstream biodiversity within and across sectors to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and to put ourselves on a trajectory that enables us to achieve the 2050 vision of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity.

As the Presidency of the COP is passed from the Republic of Korea to Mexico, we need to build on the achievements since COP 12, which to my mind provide a solid foundation for moving forward. 135 Parties have issued updated or new national biodiversity strategies and action plans to guide the implementation at the national level of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. In addition, 108 Parties have prepared action plans for the achievement of Target 11. More than 60 Parties have indicated priority actions towards Targets 5 and 15. Over 150 Parties have prepared Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement of UNFCCC and a fast growing number of Parties are engaging in the process to establish land degradation neutrality targets under UNCCD.

I believe that this list of instruments and intentions shows that we have understood the urgency to act — and to act collectively. In addition, we need to act coherently and effectively and avoid that action intended for one purpose neutralizes advances made in other fields.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This high-level segment brings together ministers and leaders for the environment with those responsible for agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism. I applaud Mexico for this initiative. The dialogue is another important step towards overcoming the tendency to blame each other: environmentalists attribute 70 per cent of biodiversity loss to agriculture while many farmers blame environmental regulations for making food production uneconomical. Yet, don't we all want the same thing? We want safe and nutritious and, where possible, locally produced food at affordable prices, and we want production systems that conserve or even enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services. Therefore, we need to sit down together and develop the mechanisms that promote such production systems and make them profitable.

I want to thank the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations – FAO – and its committees on agriculture, forestry and fisheries for their leadership in bringing biodiversity

issues to the table and for developing solutions that align the interests of the productive sectors with those of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. I also want to acknowledge the important work of the United Nations World Tourism Organization for its increasing attention to environmental issues in the tourism sector. I would be remiss not to acknowledge the great contributions of and collaboration with the GEF, UNEP, UNDP, UNCCD, UNFCCC, IUCN and others in this context. Without these partners, our dialogue today would be a monologue.

The discussions at the high-level segment will enable us to work as partners across sectors and with a desire to acknowledge our different needs and to find solutions that help all members of society. I am confident that your experiences and ideas will enable us to implement national and international policies in which biodiversity is much more mainstreamed now than it has been.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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