



**Statement by Mr. Braulio F. de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention  
on Biological Diversity**

*on the occasion of*

**Sixteenth Regular Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture  
(Rome, 30 January – 3 February 2017)**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to participate in this session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and to discuss opportunities to further integrate biodiversity within the agriculture and food production sectors. Any steps that can be taken to align the work of the Commission with the implementation of related areas under the Convention on Biological Diversity would facilitate the efforts of countries by promoting an integrated approach that ranges from policies to actions within the continuum spanning from production and sustainable use to conservation.

As the draft *State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture* report illustrates, biodiversity is the origin of all crops and domesticated livestock, and the source of key ecosystem services that support agriculture to ensure nutritional diversity, to increase productivity and to guarantee a long-term viability and profitability of food production systems. Genetic resources therefore have a rightful place at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically in Goal 2 and in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, particularly in Aichi Biodiversity Targets 7 and 13, and 16. Efforts to advance progress towards these must therefore be undertaken collaboratively by all respective constituencies and stakeholders.

With that thinking in mind, the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Cancun, Mexico, just over a month ago, recognized the urgent need to maintain or restore the ecological basis of food production, including genetic resources for food and agriculture, their landraces and wild relatives as well as the ecosystem services, as the key pathway to achieve sustainable productivity and nutritional gains. The thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties was preceded by a high-level segment in which a considerable number of ministers responsible for agriculture, environment, fisheries, forestry, and tourism, respectively, exchanged their views and advanced commonalities. Understanding each other's perspectives and priorities is the basis towards developing common approaches. I am convinced that these dialogues were an important step in breaking down communication barriers between sectoral silos. The Cancun Declaration adopted by ministers and heads of delegations demonstrated their commitment towards integrating, in a coherent manner, actions for the conservation, sustainable use, management and restoration of biological diversity and ecosystem services in sectoral and cross-sectoral policies, plans and programmes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Negotiations of both the high-level segment and the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties benefitted from preparatory work and the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, including work undertaken in its committees on agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and the process to prepare the report on the *State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*. Allow me to briefly report on some of the outcomes relevant to the agenda of your meeting.

In assessing progress in the implementation of the Convention, its Protocols and its Strategic Plan, the Conference of the Parties considered the status of ratification and implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing. The Nagoya Protocol has now received 94 ratifications and many more are expected in the coming months. In this context, the Conference of the Parties invited Parties and other Governments to take note of and apply, as appropriate, the voluntary guidelines contained in the *Elements to Facilitate Domestic Implementation of Access and Benefit-Sharing for Different Subsectors of Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, which had been welcomed by this Commission as well as by the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization.

One of the issues that was initially discussed separately under the Convention in the context of synthetic biology and under the Nagoya Protocol was the question of digital sequence information on genetic resources. The cross-cutting nature of this issue resulted in decisions being prepared jointly and then adopted by both the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol. In these decisions, Parties agreed to consider any potential implications of the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources at their next meetings. The decisions establish a coordinated process for further work on this topic in the current biennium which includes the submission of views, the commissioning of a study to clarify terminology and concepts and to assess the extent and terms and conditions of use of digital sequence information, a meeting of an expert group and consideration of this matter by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice.

In the context of the decision on cooperation adopted by the second meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol, the Executive Secretary was requested to continue to engage with relevant ongoing processes and policy debates including in this Commission, among others, to collect information on current discussions on the relationship between the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources and the provision of access and benefit-sharing arising from the utilization of genetic resources.

The Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting also considered the implications of the assessment on pollinators, pollination and food production of the Intergovernmental Science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for the work of the Convention, which is directly related to the *State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture* and agenda item 7 of this present meeting. The decision highlights the essential role of pollinators, including wild pollinators, for food production and the need to address threats to their conservation, recognizing the potential to enhance and secure crop production by increasing the abundance and diversity of pollinators through protection of the plants and habitats on which they depend for foraging and nesting. The decision also invites relevant organizations to promote genetic diversity within populations of managed pollinators and to integrate consideration of the conservation and sustainable use of pollinators, including wild pollinators, into agricultural extension services; to promote further research and risk assessment procedures to address gaps in knowledge identified in the Assessment, including the potential impacts of pesticides and of living modified organisms on pollinator populations under different climatic conditions. The decision which the Conference of the Parties requested me to bring to the attention of this body calls for substantive technical work, including in the context of the International Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Pollinators and I look forward to discussing how this work can be accomplished collaboratively.

The decision of the Conference of the Parties on mainstreaming and the integration of biodiversity within and across sectors encourages Parties to maintain genetic diversity of resources for food and agriculture and their landraces/farmers' varieties and wild relatives as a key pathway to achieving sustainable productivity and nutritional gains, in particular in centres of genetic diversity. The decision takes note of the global plans of action adopted by the Commission and endorsed by the Conference on plant, animal and forest genetic resources of the Food and Agriculture Organization and encourages Parties to implement the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the Nagoya Protocol in a mutually supportive manner.

The decision further invites the Food and Agriculture Organization, this Commission and the Committee on Agriculture to support the development and implementation of measures, guidance and tools to promote the mainstreaming of biodiversity in the crop, livestock and food and nutrition sectors and to assess their effectiveness, with a view to supporting member countries in the transition to sustainable food

and agricultural systems and to consider developing a global plan of action on the basis of the *State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture* report.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to reiterate with gratitude the essential support provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. I also wish to acknowledge the exceptional leadership demonstrated by the Government of Mexico as the host and President of the 2016 United Nations Biodiversity Conference, which was essential for its success. I am convinced that we can count on this leadership during the Presidency of Mexico over the coming two years to join up the agendas on biodiversity conservation and enhancing the sustainable use of its genetic resources.

To conclude, and on a more personal note, I would like to take this opportunity to bid you farewell as my term as the Executive Secretary of the Convention comes to an end and to thank you most warmly for your cooperation and friendship over all these years. I will return in two weeks to my home country, Brazil, where I will continue to engage and support the biodiversity agenda. I am confident that the strong spirit of cooperation we have built over the past years will continue as my successor, Ms. Cristiana Paşca Palmer, takes up her duties.

I invite you to continue this dialogue and I wish you a successful conference with fruitful discussions.

Thank you for your attention.