



STATEMENT BY

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at the opening of the

**SUSTAINABLE OCEAN INITIATIVE
CAPACITY-BUILDING WORKSHOP FOR
THE WIDER CARIBBEAN AND CENTRAL AMERICA**

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Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Government of Costa Rica for hosting this workshop here in this cultural city of San José. I would especially like to thank the Ministry of Environment and Energy for their kind cooperation in organizing the workshop.

My sincere thanks also go to the Cartagena Convention Secretariat and the Caribbean Environment Programme of UN Environment, the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, the North East Pacific Regional Seas Programme, the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission and many other collaborators, such as the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem Project, for providing valuable technical inputs to the workshop. I would also like to acknowledge, with great appreciation, the financial contribution of the Government of Japan, through the Japan Biodiversity Fund, and the Government of France, through the French Marine Protected Areas Agency, which supported the organization of this workshop.

We are all here today as we share a common vision, sustainable development of marine and coastal areas. Sustainable development can only become a reality when biodiversity and ecosystems are healthy and resilient. Without addressing this critical linkage between ecosystems and sustainable development, our collective efforts will be in vain. Biological diversity underpins ecosystem functioning and the provisioning of ecosystem services essential for human well-being. The oceans, and the life therein, are critical to the healthy functioning of the planet. In fact, the biogeochemical processes they support provide half of the oxygen we breathe. Oceans provide billions of people with a substantial share of their protein intake, and support the livelihood and cultural well-being of many around the world. Clearly, the health of the oceans and the future of sustainable development are intimately intertwined.

The importance of biodiversity as an integral part of sustainable development lies at the core of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. These targets, adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010, lay out an ambitious agenda for achieving a future where ecosystems are able to provide critical services that underpin planetary well-being, and where the global community can sustainably and equitably benefit from biodiversity without impacting the ability of future generations to do so.

The importance of marine biodiversity to sustainable development was further recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. In this process, global leaders emphasized the urgency of taking action to improve the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity. In particular, Goal 14 aims to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development and emphasizes the strong linkages between marine biodiversity and broader sustainable development objectives, and reflects the key elements of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Since 2010, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets have provided an effective framework for cooperation to achieve a future in which the global community can sustainably and equitably benefit from biodiversity without impacting the ability of future generations to do so. Our efforts at different scales to achieve the Aichi Targets will therefore directly contribute to implementing 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In this vein, ministers and heads of delegations at the high-level segment of the United Nations Biodiversity Conference, held in Cancun in December 2016, expressed their commitments, through the adoption of the Cancun Declaration, to work at all levels within governments and across sectors to mainstream biodiversity in sectoral development. Committed ministers and heads of delegation agreed to incorporate biodiversity values into national accounting and reporting systems; strengthen institutional

support and capacities for biodiversity mainstreaming; and ensure that sectoral and cross-sectoral policies, plans and programmes integrate the conservation, sustainable use and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Parties to the Convention have acknowledged the major challenges they face in their efforts to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. They include a lack of institutional, technical, managerial and scientific capacity as well as governance challenges and a limited information base in many areas. These challenges outline the urgent need for expanded efforts to develop the capacity of Parties and facilitate partnerships among relevant stakeholders.

In support of Parties in their efforts to strengthen the critical linkage between biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, the Secretariat has been providing capacity-development opportunities to countries around the world and engaging various partners, through the partnership framework of Sustainable Ocean Initiative, at the national, regional and global levels. Recently, the United Nations General Assembly noted with appreciation the work of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative under the Convention in its resolution 71/257 on oceans and the law of the sea.

Likewise, the Secretariat of the Convention has been working closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and UN Environment, with the support of the Governments of the Republic of Korea and Japan, and the European Commission, together with various global and regional organizations, to facilitate cross-sectoral regional-scale dialogue and coordination. In particular, the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fisheries Bodies on Accelerating Progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, was convened in Seoul in September 2016. Many of regional organizations present at this workshop have also contributed to the outcome of this global dialogue. The global dialogue, which will become a regular forum, will help to strengthen existing collaboration among regional bodies, and thereby enhance their support for national efforts to achieve the Aichi Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The fourth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* suggests that significant progress has been made towards meeting some components of most of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. However, indicators suggest that the status of biodiversity will continue to decline without urgent action. Reversing these trends will require enhanced dialogue and coordinated action by all sectors and stakeholders, a common vision, as well as a strategic focus on capacity development.

If we are to achieve the goals of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, we will have to abandon business-as-usual approaches and mainstream biodiversity into our development planning, governance and decision-making. And we will have to mobilize the resources needed to address key capacity gaps that prevent many from taking the steps needed to achieve these goals.

Let us take this workshop as an opportunity to forge partnerships, facilitate collaboration, learn from each other and identify steps for enhanced implementation, and work towards realizing our collective vision for healthy, productive and sustainable oceans for this region.

With this, I wish you a successful and fruitful workshop.

Thank you for your attention.
