



**STATEMENT BY**

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**to the**

**COUNCIL OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY**

**at its 52nd meeting**

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Distinguished members of the Council,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank Ms. Naoko Ishii for inviting me to brief the Council on the recent developments under the Convention on Biological Diversity. As you may be aware, I started my tenure as the Executive Secretary of the Convention just two months ago, and it is my pleasure to be here today to address you in my new capacity.

In my intervention today, I would like to do three things. First, I will share with you some of the most relevant outcomes of the United Nations Biodiversity Conference, which was held this past December in Cancun, where the governing bodies of the Convention and its two Protocols – Access and Benefit-sharing and Biosafety – held their meetings. Second, I will briefly address the way biodiversity is reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the need to raise the profile of the importance of biodiversity. Third and finally, I will discuss the decision on the financial mechanism adopted by the Conference.

Let me start with the outcomes of the Biodiversity Conference. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Mexico on an excellent set of meetings and on the leadership they showed towards advancing the biodiversity agenda in more innovative way.

The United Nations Biodiversity Conference focused on the mainstreaming of biodiversity within four key sectors – agriculture, forests, fisheries and tourism. Additionally, the Conference adopted decisions on cross-sectoral policies, such as incentive measures, and on the engagement of key actors, including the private sector, and subnational governments. Ministers and other high-level representatives adopted the Cancun Declaration, which includes many commitments on these sectors, and Parties took decisions on these and other issues.

Another encouraging development in Mexico was the launch of the Business and Biodiversity Pledge. The pledge sets forth quite specific commitments of businesses to address biodiversity, including reporting on impacts and how the pledge itself has been implemented. Over 150 businesses have signed on, and we are working with partners to expand this as a tool going forward.

Despite these achievements, it is clear that we will not achieve the objectives of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 or most of its twenty Aichi Biodiversity Targets *without substantial additional efforts*. We must therefore redouble our efforts and pragmatically address the question of implementation, while looking beyond 2020 and the innovative changes that might be necessary to make the biodiversity agenda a true priority for the global community. In this regard, we also need to urgently raise the political profile of biodiversity and ecosystems, and this, among other things, will be a top priority for me as the Executive Secretary of the Convention.

Our next United Nations Biodiversity Conference, which will be held in October 2018 in Egypt, will be an important step on this road. It will include a focus on the mainstreaming of biodiversity in the infrastructure, energy and mining, manufacturing and processing industry, and health sectors. There will be enormous investments in the coming decades in these sectors. The following United Nations Biodiversity Conference will be held in 2020 in China, where Parties will take a hard look at what has been accomplished during the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity 2011-2020, and the road ahead, giving us a valuable opportunity to explore new ways to make this agenda more impactful.

This leads me to my second point – the linkage between biodiversity and the 2030 Agenda. Quite simply, biodiversity is essential for sustainable development. This is reflected in the fact that biodiversity has been strongly integrated into the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals – not only in Goal 14 on oceans and Goal 15 on terrestrial biodiversity, but also throughout all the other Goals. It will be crucial, as countries implement the 2030 Agenda, that biodiversity is a central part of those efforts.

In Mexico, the Convention Secretariat launched both a policy brief and a technical guide aimed at decision makers outside the environment area, setting out how biodiversity will contribute to the

achievement of the 2030 Agenda. We did this through a tremendous partnership, with the World Bank, UNDP, UN Environment, and FAO, and I would like to thank them for this good collaboration.

In order to raise the profile of the importance of biodiversity, it is also crucial for us to be more effective in highlighting the close linkages between biodiversity and climate change, as well as other global challenges, such as food security, peace and stability, natural disasters, and urban development. Indeed, I firmly believe that the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity hold the solution for many of the current global challenges!

Throughout this, the GEF will be one of the key partners for the Biodiversity Convention.

Thus, finally, let me discuss the decision taken by the United Nations Biodiversity Conference on the financial mechanism, which I know is of particular relevance for the GEF Council.

GEF 7 comes at a very crucial time for the Convention! It will span the last two years of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the commitments that Parties will adopt beyond 2020.

With this view in mind, the Conference of the Parties adopted a four-year framework of programme priorities with respect to the seventh replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund. The entire text of the four-year framework is just a page and a half long, but it reflects intense discussions and negotiations, and resulted in a significant achievement of providing strategic guidance, not merely a long list of needs. And, in keeping with the direction from our Parties, it was crafted in close collaboration with the GEF Secretariat, as well as with inputs from the other global biodiversity-related conventions, and built on the GEF-6 biodiversity strategy.

The four-year framework of programme priorities comprises three clusters of areas for GEF focus: *first*, to mainstream biodiversity across sectors and landscapes and seascapes; *second*, to address direct drivers to protect habitats and species; and *third*, to further develop policies relevant to biodiversity and institutional frameworks. Each of these three areas includes specific priorities, and sets forth detailed “expected outcomes.” The decision further calls on GEF to report on the four-year framework of programme priorities in its future reports to the Conference of the Parties. The complete text is easily found on the website of the Convention.

In addition, pursuant to a decision adopted at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, a team of experts, composed of developing and developed country Parties as well as one international organization, led the second determination of funding requirements for the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols for GEF-7. The assessment found that significant *additional funding* would be needed in GEF-7 in order to achieve the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and its Aichi Targets, as well as the activities of the Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols. The magnitude of the assessed needs is in the range of 2.8 billion to 4.5 billion dollars for the period 2018-2022.

I formally transmitted both the decision on the financial mechanism and the needs assessment to the GEF Secretariat earlier this year.

Regarding the GEF-7 replenishment proposal, I would like to say from the outset that the Secretariat supports the general approach towards more integrated programming and believes that innovative approaches have to be explored in operationalizing the guidance received from the Conventions. However, any such initiatives have to clearly demonstrate that they are more effective and generate tangible and measurable results for the biodiversity priorities identified by our Parties. Whatever strategic approach will finally be decided for the GEF-7 replenishment, we need to ensure that biodiversity receives full consideration and that the financial allocation not only will respond to the needs identified by our Parties but also can be tracked.

In closing, let me express my appreciation to the CEO of GEF for the spirit of collaboration and consultation with which the GEF secretariat is approaching the challenging exercise of drafting the GEF-7 programming directions and policy framework. Just last week, Naoko and her team came to visit us in Montreal, and I wish to thank her for the constructive and forward-looking meeting. This was an opportunity for us to raise some of our questions and concerns regarding the practical implications of the

proposed approach for GEF-7 replenishment, in particular with regard to countries' ownership and capacity to deal with the increased coordination challenges of integrated programming. I know this firsthand from my experience as a former Minister of Environment, Waters and Forests of Romania.

We stand ready to further collaborate and provide our input. It is in our common interest to make the financial mechanism even more effective and stronger in the next replenishment cycle. Therefore, I was pleased to learn that the GEF Secretariat plans to coordinate a meeting with the Convention Secretariats, and we would urge that such a meeting take place very soon.

I look forward to our close collaboration with the GEF in the coming months, and the next steps in the GEF 7 replenishment.

Thank you.

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