



**Statement by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity
at the Sustainable Ocean Summit**

Halifax, Canada, 29 November – 1 December 2017

Mr. Chair,
Distinguished panellists,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank the World Ocean Council for inviting me to speak at this important event. As the new Executive Secretary of the United Nations Biodiversity Convention, it is a great pleasure for me to be here among so many leading businesspeople with a strong interest in ocean sustainability.

As we all know, the business and environment communities were historically not close allies. It was long believed that economic growth could not be compatible with a healthy environment. Thankfully, that has changed. We now know that the conservation and sustainable use of ocean resources is not a barrier to economic growth, but that it makes perfect business sense.

The last decade has seen a paradigm shift in how we approach sustainability. Natural disasters, political strife, climate change and mass migration have inextricably altered the global landscape. As a result, we now recognize that conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity must also be accompanied by opportunities for sustainable economic growth and social inclusion.

Concepts such as the blue economy, which applies the principles of the green economy to the ocean, show the enormity of opportunities in the ocean. This spirit of opportunity must also consider the essential role of biodiversity in underpinning economic growth.

We see many examples of approaches that are good for both the environment and the bottom line. For example, some in the shipping community are moving towards designs that reduce fuel costs as well as ship noise that can impact marine species. New seafood traceability tools help consumers buy responsibly harvested fish and enable responsible fishers to gain more income from their quality products. Innovative approaches to recycling and upcycling of plastic ocean debris are helping address one of the most pressing threats to the ocean while giving new



life to yesterday's plastic garbage. Positive examples such as these need to be scaled up if we are reverse the startling global trends in biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation.

The age-old division between business and environment cannot persist if we hope to have a profitable and sustainable future on this planet. Economic growth and a healthy environment are intrinsically linked as two of the three pillars of sustainable development. And this linkage is clearly reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations Biodiversity Convention, also known as the Convention on Biological Diversity or CBD, has 196 Parties and focuses on the conservation and sustainable use of the planet's diverse living resources, or "biodiversity". The Convention was adopted at the Earth Summit in 1992 and is a central component of the global framework for sustainable development.

The essential role of the business community in achieving the goals of the United Nations Biodiversity Convention has been clearly recognized. To support this, we created the Global Partnership for Business and Biodiversity in 2010 as a platform for dialogue and mutual learning between the business and biodiversity communities. We also convene the Business and Biodiversity Forum biennially at meetings of the United Nations Biodiversity Conference. And, our Business and Biodiversity Pledge has been signed by more than 100 companies which have committed to take action to minimize negative impacts and optimize positive impacts on biodiversity, and to act as ambassadors for responsible stewardship of biodiversity.

Recently, Parties to the United Nations Biodiversity Convention have stressed the need to better integrate or "mainstream" biodiversity into sectoral planning and policymaking. At the last United Nations Biodiversity Conference, in 2016, which was attended by more than 8,000 delegates, Parties focused on mainstreaming biodiversity into agriculture, forestry, tourism and fisheries, outlining specific actions and approaches to support mainstreaming biodiversity in these sectors.

At the meeting's high-level segment, ministers and heads of delegation adopted the Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Well-Being. In doing so, they committed to ensure that sectoral and cross-sectoral policies and programmes integrate the conservation, sustainable use and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems.

The next United Nations Biodiversity Conference, in Egypt in 2018, will address mainstreaming in energy and mining, infrastructure, manufacturing, processing, and health, areas that can have a significant impact on ocean ecosystems. It is clear that mainstreaming cannot truly be achieved in these sectors without the active engagement of the business community. Thus, I am here to reach out to you to seek your collaboration and your bold action.

I am also here to tell you that there are a number of ways in which we can help the ocean business community in moving towards more sustainable and biodiversity-friendly practices.

How can we do this?

First, the United Nations Biodiversity Convention works with Governments and organizations to produce guidance on issues such as environmental impact assessment, marine spatial planning, marine debris, underwater noise, natural capital accounting and ecosystem safeguards. This guidance can help the business community to identify ways to best address biodiversity issues in planning and business practices.

Second, our work on describing ecologically or biologically significant marine areas, or “EBSAs”, has mapped out more than 200 areas that are critical to the healthy functioning of ocean ecosystems. EBSAs can provide businesses with information on the services provided by various ocean systems and how to avoid adversely impacting these services.

Discussions under the United Nations Biodiversity Convention have also pointed out areas in which the implications for biodiversity make certain activities too risky to undertake. In particular, ocean fertilization, which I see will be discussed this week, carries potentially significant environmental and ecological impacts that far outweigh its purported benefits, which largely remain unproven. As such, Governments in both the United Nations Biodiversity Convention and the International Maritime Organization have agreed that ocean fertilization is only to be carried out for small-scale research purposes. Issues such as this highlight the need for open and honest dialogue among industry, policymakers, scientists and local communities to avoid disastrous long-term ecological impacts.

We urge you to make use of the expertise of the United Nations biodiversity community, and, importantly, show leadership on biodiversity within your respective industries. The time for talk has long passed.

We now need to show that we are “walking the walk”.

At the global level, you may be familiar with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, which were adopted by Parties to the United Nations Biodiversity Convention in 2010. These targets clearly reflect many of the same elements as the Sustainable Development Goals, and, therefore, our common vision for the future. Achieving these targets is not possible without all of you. And time is short: we are less than three years away from the 2020 deadline for the Aichi Targets.

In addition, we are now working with Parties to lay out the post-2020 biodiversity framework, and I very much welcome and encourage you all to participate in this process. We need to hear your insights and experiences in order to craft an ambitious and achievable agenda for the future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As Executive Secretary of the United Nations Biodiversity Convention, one of my priorities is to strengthen our collaboration with the private sector, recognizing the critical need for champions in the business community.

I urge you all to take up this challenge and become biodiversity champions not just in word, but in deed. Conserving and sustainably using the biodiversity of the ocean makes business sense and is good for the bottom line in the long term. Indeed, this should not be seen as a burden but, rather, as an opportunity for the triple-bottom-line, serving profit as well as people and the planet.

I count on you all to do your part as we all work together towards our common goal of a healthy, productive and sustainable global community.

I also invite you all to come to the next United Nations Biodiversity Conference in Egypt in 2018 to share your experiences, engage with the biodiversity community and help to identify ways for us to reach our common goals.

Thank you for your attention.
