



STATEMENT BY

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

at the opening of the

**SUBREGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR ARABIC-SPEAKING COUNTRIES
ON THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM**

Cairo, Egypt

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*Distinguished National Focal Points and other Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I want to welcome you to the Subregional Workshop for Arabic Speaking Countries on the Clearing-House Mechanism.

I would like to thank the Governments of Egypt and Japan for their generous financial support which has allowed the Secretariat to convene this regional capacity-building workshop as part of its on-going support to developing country Parties for the establishment and strengthening of their national clearing-house mechanisms.

Please allow me to begin my remarks on a sombre note.

It is with deep sadness that I need to announce the death of our esteemed friend and dear colleague Olivier de Munck, Programme Officer for the Clearing-House Mechanism.

As all of you know, he was a supremely dedicated colleague who joined the Secretariat in 1999. For almost two decades, Olivier helped develop and then lead the Clearing House Mechanism. He was generous with his time and his expertise. Olivier will be much missed and mourned by colleagues, partners and focal points all across the world, with whom he shared his passion for using technology to better protect biodiversity.

Olivier was a very kind colleague, mentor and friend. His optimism, enthusiasm and decency made the Secretariat a better place to work. He always strove for perfection. Over the last period he fought his illness, cancer, with tremendous courage and fortitude. He loved his work and he very much loved his family. He fought to stay with us all for as long as he could.

Let us take a moment of silence to remember Olivier.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Biodiversity underpins ecosystem functioning and the provisioning of ecosystem services essential for human well-being. 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 in which ecosystems are able to provide critical services that underpin planetary well-being, and in which the global community can sustainably and equitably benefit from biodiversity without impacting the ability of future generations to do so.

The fourth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*, published in 2014, 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.

Therefore, to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, business-as-usual approaches must be abandoned and biodiversity needs to be mainstreamed into development planning, resource mobilization, governance, and decision-making. Through this process, Parties are expected to update their National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans, and adopt national targets aligned to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

This year we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Since entering into force, the Convention has been implemented through the vision and leadership displayed by countries, non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples and local communities, the scientific community and individuals alike.

Over the course of this year, the Parties to the Convention will be celebrating and highlighting their successes in implementing the Convention. These stories, in their entirety, will represent a story of our journey to build a life in harmony with nature. The Clearing House Mechanism will be an important conduit and network to share these stories.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this context, national clearing-house mechanisms have a supporting role to play in identifying relevant information and knowledge, and making it accessible for those who need it. More specifically, national clearing-house mechanisms can be used to share information about national biodiversity strategies and action plans, and their implementation at the national level. In addition, national clearing-house mechanisms can be catalytic in engaging stakeholders and establishing partnerships.

Establishing and maintaining an effective national clearing-house mechanism, however, is a challenging undertaking. The starting point for a country is to understand the benefits that it can gain from a national clearing-house mechanism, and to adopt a sound approach for its governance, development, and maintenance. This is the key to its long-term effectiveness and sustainability, and it will be discussed during the workshop.

This workshop will also be based on the Bioland Tool, developed by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity thanks to the support of the Japan Biodiversity Fund. The purpose of the tool is to overcome many of the barriers that Parties face in the establishment of their national clearing-house mechanisms. The tool is essentially a basic generic national clearing-house mechanism that can be made available online to interested Parties and allow them to easily share key information related to their national biodiversity strategies and action plans, and the corresponding implementation at the national level.

When making use of the Bioland Tool, please keep in mind that your feedback will be extremely valuable in order to improve this tool and make it as effective as possible. We specifically welcome the observations about issues with using Arabic language on the web, for which you are the best possible group to provide such feedback.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I sincerely hope that this workshop will help you and also allow you to share experiences, to learn from each other, and find ways to collaborate on how to face joint challenges.

In conclusion, I wish you very productive discussions over the next few days. I look forward to further developments of your national clearing-house mechanisms as an effective platform to support the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in this sub-region.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.
