



**STATEMENT BY  
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ACTING EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
of the  
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
at the opening of the  
Subregional Exchange for the Caribbean on the Restoration of Forests and Other Ecosystems  
9-13 March 2020**

*Distinguished participants and colleagues, all courtesies observed,*

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the beautiful island of Saint Lucia and to the Subregional Exchange for the Caribbean on the Restoration of Forests and Other Ecosystems.

This workshop is organized as part of a series convened through the implementation of the Forest Ecosystem Restoration Initiative, or FERI. FERI was welcomed by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its twelfth meeting, in 2014, and progress in its implementation was welcomed in subsequent meetings of the Conference of the Parties.

I express my sincere gratitude to the Korea Forest Service of the Government of the Republic of Korea for generously providing the financial support to carry out the activities of the Initiative, including this workshop, and to the European Union for also providing support to delegates participating in this workshop.

I thank the Government of Saint Lucia for graciously hosting us. Saint Lucia is a country with a superb natural environment, consisting of a variety of ecosystems endowed with high levels of biodiversity. Saint Lucia has made great efforts to overcome the challenges threatening these ecosystems. For example, Saint Lucia has successfully implemented projects to stabilize slopes through reforestation and restoration of coastal areas and riverbanks with very positive results.

I am happy to note that Saint Lucia is not alone in this regard. Ecosystem restoration has gained momentum in the Caribbean region. All countries present have examples of significant policies and activities regarding ecosystem rehabilitation in all kinds of settings — from rainforests to mangroves and marine ecosystems. Moreover, the region has acknowledged the benefits of healthy ecosystems for disaster risk reduction, supporting livelihoods and contributing to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Globally, ecosystem degradation affects the livelihoods of 3.2 billion people. This costs around 10 per cent of the world's GDP annually. Importantly, the future of humanity depends on our capacity to act now. Although the situation is critical, there are encouraging signs that the international community is mobilizing to put an end to the destruction of ecosystems. In fact, ecosystem restoration is acknowledged in different international forums, for example: the United Nations General Assembly declared 2021–2030 the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, aiming to boost efforts and rally support from different stakeholders to restore degraded ecosystems;



To this end, this workshop may offer an opportunity to kick-start a process for setting a regional ambition on ecosystem restoration for the Caribbean. I know that the Government of Saint-Lucia, the regional partners and the Secretariat stand ready to support you and keep this momentum going;

(a) Sustainable Development Goals 13, 14 and 15 include targets related to the conservation and rehabilitation of the natural environment;

(b) In the framework of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2030, Global Forest Goal 1 establishes forest restoration as one of its main components;

(c) Under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, over 120 countries have set land degradation neutrality targets;

(d) In the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity, three Aichi Biodiversity Targets include area-based objectives related to ecosystem restoration — Targets 5, 14 and 15.

In their last national reports to the Convention, Caribbean countries presented their progress in implementing these targets, and we see many encouraging results:

According to the FAO Global *Forest Resources Assessments*, in 2010, the area of forest in the Caribbean region was estimated at 7 million hectares, representing approximately 30 per cent of the total land area. While deforestation continues, it is encouraging to see that forest cover in the region remained relatively stable during the previous three decades, even with a slight increase in forest area from 2010 to 2015.

Moreover, most Caribbean countries have engaged in government or community-managed projects that make use of ecosystems for services of water catchment, carbon storage and disaster risk reduction, while ensuring economic benefits for local people. The role of forests in climate change adaptation is clear, for example through slope stabilization, as well as coastal protection through mangrove planting. As the Caribbean is particularly vulnerable to climate-change-related extreme weather events, such as high-category hurricanes, restoring ecosystems is especially important for regional well-being.

Currently, negotiations are under way to develop the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which builds on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and sets out an ambitious plan to implement broad-based action towards the 2050 Vision, wherein biodiversity is valued, conserved and restored. The renewed targets will rally efforts to protect and restore freshwater, marine and terrestrial ecosystems towards achieving a net increase in their area, connectivity and integrity.

We take note of the outcomes of the second meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, which was held last month. We hope that this workshop can support countries in strengthening their knowledge of ecosystem restoration, which can be useful during the ongoing negotiation processes for the post-2020 framework.

Another important aspect regarding implementation is cost-effectiveness. Recent science shows that the benefits of restoration outweigh the costs, particularly when considering the full value of ecosystem services. According to a recent study by the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility, damage from wind, storm surge and inland flooding can mean annual expected losses of between 2 and 9 per cent of GDP by 2030 in certain Caribbean countries.

A report by the Economics of Climate Adaptation Working Group shows that early investment in ecosystem-based climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies, including ecosystem restoration, could avoid up to 65 per cent of expected losses. An IUCN-supported study also found that every dollar invested in a marine park on the west coast of Barbados, for instance, could reduce hurricane losses by \$20.

We hope that this workshop will assist you in designing ecosystem restoration plans that are effective in reaching national restoration targets in a cost-effective manner, help conserve biodiversity and support sustainable livelihoods.

Before I conclude, I want to thank everyone that made this workshop possible, particularly the host Government team and our colleagues at OECS and CARICOM. I also want to thank all of you: country delegates, representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities, regional organizations and esteemed experts, as well as the CBD Secretariat team, including Blaise and Paloma.

I wish you all very productive discussions and useful outcomes that can be used by your respective countries and organizations to advance ecosystem restoration on the road to achieving the 2050 Vision of “Living in harmony with nature”.

Thank you.

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