



STATEMENT BY
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ON THE OCCASION OF

THE BONN CHALLENGE 2.0: IMPLEMENTING RESTORATION PARTNERSHIPS
HIGH LEVEL ROUNDTABLE

BONN-BAD GODESBERG, GERMANY

20 MARCH 2015



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

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**Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good afternoon.

Let me join others in expressing my appreciation to our hosts for their efforts in charting the Bonn Challenge process forward.

Since early 2000, I have witnessed the design of this global movement to restore 150 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by 2020 and the rise of a third of pledges for restoration. With the New York Declaration on Forests in 2014, we anticipate greater on the ground action in both developing and developed countries.

Reaching the end goal is possible and necessary. The well-being and prosperity of the world population in the coming decades will in large part depend on conservation and restoration of ecosystems.

With coordinated actions and investment for ecosystem conservation and restoration, not only can we reach the target from the New York Declaration on Forests calling for an additional 200 million hectares by 2030, but moreover fulfill the aim of the Bonn Challenge: to serve as a vehicle to help countries achieve existing international commitments, in particular within the Rio Conventions and to make strides toward achieving proposed Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2010, at the tenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the 193 Parties to the CBD agreed on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 has been supported by the governing bodies of all the biodiversity related Conventions and the United Nations General Assembly and is regarded as a universal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

IUCN and other partners around this table are promoting its implementation. Specifically, Aichi Biodiversity Target 15 calls for enhancing ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks, including through restoring at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems by 2020. Coupled to this, Aichi Biodiversity Target 5 calls for reducing the rate of loss of natural habitats, including forests, Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 calls for improving protected area networks, and Aichi Biodiversity Target 14 calls for the restoration of ecosystems that provide essential services to human well-being.

Let me underscore three points:

First, the timing is ripe for countries committed to the Bonn Challenge to further optimize their contribution to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. In countries, like Costa Rica, Colombia and Brazil, forest and landscape restoration initiatives have been contributing toward achieving multiple forest related targets at the national level. I encourage all the countries gathered today to describe their restoration achievements including those that yield co-benefits of improving livelihoods, sequestering carbon and leveraging additional benefits to biodiversity.

Colombia, for example, has adopted a National Policy for the Integral Management of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and a National Plan for the Restoration of Ecosystems, including components to restore mangroves, highland areas, and areas affected by fire. Their targets include restoring or rehabilitating 280,000 hectares for protective aims, including biological corridors for connectivity and the prevention of deforestation. These policy instruments, together with other initiatives under Vision Amazonia to reach zero deforestation in the Colombian Amazon by 2020, and others underway, portray the complementarities of different initiatives to halt habitat loss, restore ecosystem functions and value the contributions of natural capital to society.

In supporting countries' efforts to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the CBD Secretariat has been assessing the overall state of progress towards Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5, 11, 14 and 15 and examining approaches that can help countries advance on their commitments.

Secondly, the milestones reached to date through the Bonn Challenge, should constitute a stepping stone to quantify the amount, scale and type of restoration interventions carried out nationally and to formalize such commitments in national policy instruments, such as a country's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs). The benefits of forest and landscape restoration to biodiversity conservation and livelihoods, from restored ecosystem services, including increased connectivity, habitat extent and quality, should be accounted to maximize the potential of restoration.

Restoration must embed the vision of enhancing native ecosystem functions and avoiding further reduction or conversion of natural forest cover, or loss in other natural ecosystems. Such a long term vision will help countries shape their sustainable development agendas and ensure adaptive measures to mitigate environment-related risks.

According to the fourth Global Biodiversity Outlook, the restoration of forest landscapes has the potential to generate significant biodiversity benefits. In identifying possible areas for restoration, consideration should be given to improving the extent, quality and connectivity of high-biodiversity areas, including areas rich in biodiversity or home to threatened or endangered species, as well as those that deliver important ecosystem services.

To maximize the potential of restoration to biodiversity a detailed analysis will require an assessment of:

- The potential of restoration to reestablish connections between different habitats.
- The potential of restoration to increase the habitat extent, and
- The potential of restoration to improve habitat quality.

Better accounting of the potential impacts of restoration on biodiversity can help to ensure that restoration activities deliver the greatest possible impacts. These impacts include the greater provision of ecosystem services, such as the provision of water, pollination, and erosion control or carbon sequestration. Moreover, it can also help to build resilient ecosystems that are better able to cope with stresses and to adapt to climate change.

Distinguished delegates,

Lastly, restoration is part of a bigger picture, and a mosaic of options. But it should not be misinterpreted as a substitute to conservation. The core aim is to regain ecological integrity in degraded lands and improve human wellbeing and ecological functions. Attaining this may involve a range of restoration interventions for a variety of potential land uses.

Although afforestation and reforestation are part of forest restoration strategies, such activities should not be promoted in non-forested ecosystems, even if the economic benefits outweigh the opportunity costs. Working across the whole landscape with a mosaic of land uses, requires sufficient assessments of the ecological conditions, social-cultural dynamics and other enabling factors to calculate trade-offs and adjust land use plans.

A recent letter in Science (*The tyranny of trees in grassy biomes*) articulates this point. Recent discussions in academic literature have prompted clarity on what forest landscape restoration aims to promote and how to attest to the assessment of more than two billion hectares of opportunities for restoration of deforested and degraded landscapes. The letter led to a critical assessment of restoration in biomes that have the potential for tree growth, and an examination of the potential restoration of other natural vegetation within a broader landscape.

If we are committed to the Bonn Challenge, we must be clear: forest landscape restoration does not advocate increasing tree cover beyond what would be ecologically appropriate for a particular location. It is the responsibility of each country to attest what is ecologically appropriate and to establish their baseline maps, with a monitoring system in place to track progress.

I am pleased that the current Map of Forest Restoration Opportunities will be reviewed, with a view to enhancing the global baseline for monitoring progress and exploring the potential to link with other emerging maps of ecosystems worldwide in need of restoration, such as grasslands wetlands, and drylands, among others. The CBD Secretariat is currently working with the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration to expand the guide to the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM) to better integrate biodiversity concerns and broaden the coverage of important ecosystem services.

In addition, we should not lose sight of the rehabilitation of degraded agricultural lands to productivity in mosaic landscapes. This is another important component complementing the restoration of ecosystems to natural vegetation and allowing food security and socio-economic goals to be met.

Undertaking these actions will strengthen the case for restoring degraded lands to ensure healthy, resilient and productive ecosystems for people now and in the future.

Thank you for your attention.